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IF DREAMS
COME TRUE

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IF DREAMS COME TRUE

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"The Dear Pretender."



A. L. BURT COMPANY
Publishers New York

Published by arrangement with The Penn Publishing Company

Printed in U. S. A.

PS3505

0378I3

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If Dreams Come True

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To
“ P A T ”
who has so generously helped to make
“Dreams Come True”

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If Dreams Come True

CHAPTER I

THE VISION

"FIFTY thousand dollars—here it is—use it as you wish for the next year."

Donald McIntyre drew a long breath, the memory of his grandfather's words to him that morning ringing like beautiful bells in his head.

Fifty thousand dollars! Now if he could get into shape those nebulous notions he had! It was for that he had chosen to walk to the wedding down the bleak wind-swept spaces of Fifth Avenue that March day, instead of driving, as, of course, he should. Walking might make him late,—which was a terrible faux pas because he was Head Usher,—and it would most certainly get his shoes dusty.

But Donald cared little for the conventions of his life. He had to think, and he must have space in which to think. Space—and time—and solitude. So he bent his shoulders to the gale, almost oblivious to it in the interest of his own thoughts.

Fifty thousand dollars for him to do with as he pleased! He knew vaguely what he wanted to do,—but only vaguely. It was like a dim vision. He must find some way of spending that money on people,—people who wanted things—— But all the people he

knew could get anything they wanted. Yet there were millions of others with consuming desires, hungry hearts, frustrated dreams! How could he get at them?

The wind went shrieking around a corner and hid there. In the breathless quiet that followed Donald straightened and looked about him, becoming aware for the first time of the sole other occupants of the street. Ahead of him were two women. A plump little Lady in Gray who had paused to untwist her skirts from about her ankles, and the Girl in the Shabby Suit who pulled her shoulders together in a vain attempt to hide herself from the next sharp attack of the biting wind.

A passing thought of wonder as to why they didn't take a bus on a day like this flashed through Donald's mind. And then he realized sharply that here before him were two of the people he wanted to know. They were workers. They had to walk. They were, undoubtedly, hungry-hearted folk, yearning for something that he was able to give them. If he could only see their faces,—their eyes would tell him! He hurried a little, believing for a wild instant that he might, indeed, catch up with the Girl in the Shabby Suit and say to her:

"Pardon me. But is there something you want—and can't afford to get? Well, won't you tell me about it? It's my business in life and I'd be so glad—— Thank you. I'll attend to it."

Her name and address—and then on to the Lady in Gray.

Without warning the wind pounced upon the street

again and a round gray hat with a bent quill in it somersaulted against Donald's feet and stuck there. He picked it up and went forward eagerly to meet the Lady in Gray and the Girl in the Shabby Suit.

This, he was thinking exultantly, was his chance. Life seemed, to-day, to be staggering him with opportunities. He held out the hat and took off his own, and stood with the sun gleaming on his fair hair, trying to decide how to begin. It was a trifle disconcerting to discover that these people—these workers—whom he had conceived as wistfully yearning for something quite out of reach appeared to be very content with life. The girl's cheeks were crimson, her deep blue eyes dancing with the excitement of the chase, while the Lady in Gray, who, a few moments before had been making every effort to keep her quill head-on with the wind, looked upon its wreck with a cool humorous twinkle in her eye.

"It got right by me," the Girl in the Shabby Suit apologized breathlessly, talking to the Lady in Gray and not seeming to see Donald at all. "A horrible day for hats, isn't it!" and with that she turned and drifted as lightly as a leaf down the street again.

"A horrible day for anything." The Lady in Gray agreed, talking with cheerful cynicism to Donald while she busily propped up the broken back of the feather with a paper clip and began binding it close to her hat with a veil. "But especially horrible for weddings. Young love—if there is such a thing—would be nipped in the bud on a day like this. Will you hold this a moment, please?"

Donald was pressed into service. "Are you on your way to the Fuller-McCormick wedding, by any chance?" he asked.

She nodded, taking the hat from him.

"Thank you. Looks like a mushroom, doesn't it? I ought to be sorry, because it's a brand new hat and a very stylish wedding, but both matter as little as most other things."

Donald fell into step with her.

"You surprise me. I thought weddings were affairs of great moment to all ladies."

She shrugged.

"Oh, they are like executions—no treat to a reporter."

As she spoke she gave him a sudden look and beneath the humor he saw a deep understanding. It was like an unexpected invitation, and he found himself tingling with a desire to say all sorts of things. The kind of things that would show up the inside of his mind, just as she was showing up hers. He wanted to talk to her about his idea for using that money. He believed she'd understand, perhaps help.

"You know," he said abruptly, "I'm always believing in one kind of a world and finding another."

She looked at him swiftly before replying.

"Yes?" she asked encouragingly.

He laughed a little consciously.

"That's a queer thing to say, isn't it, but I mean this. I was thinking of that Girl in the Shabby Suit ahead of us. Here she is walking on a day like this because, I suppose, she has to deny herself the comfort

of a bus. She probably has to deny herself other things the same way, yet she appears contented and happy. Don't you suppose she ever *wants* things? Don't *you*?"

She laughed lightly.

"If I can get them, I want them. If I can't, I don't."

"I see. A model of common sense."

"Or a consummate deceiver. Seriously, though, there is something I want right now, and you can give it to me."

"Just mention it," he laughed, believing for a moment that she might really mean it and he might indeed make a beginning, of doing the fantastic thing he wanted to do.

"I want a good seat at the wedding; will you see that I get it?"

"Certainly. But how did you know ——"

"Oh, there's nothing we reporters don't know!" she laughed. "I knew you the moment I saw you. I not only know who you are but I know—oh—heaps about your past. For instance ——"

"Don't! You terrify me! Not in public, please." They were approaching the awning to the church and as Donald took her arm to guide her through the little knot of spectators gathered there, a sudden inspiration came to him.

"I'll hunt you up at the reception. Then, in a private corner, I'll not only let you unfold all my dark and dreadful past but I'll also invite you to cast light on my future."

"But I don't claim to be a seer."

"I don't want wild prophecies. I want sound advice."

"Oh, very well, then. Giving sound advice is my long suit."

As he followed the Lady in Gray through the little knot of people gathered to watch the wedding from the sidewalk, he gave them a curious glance. Poor people they were, a mother with a baby carriage and two dirty ragamuffins hanging to it, a group of painted and powdered girls who chattered in noisy vulgarity as they teetered on their high heels, a young man with long hair and bright hollow eyes, a withered shrewish old woman bent nearly double, and a placid toothless old gentleman,—all of them crowding together in friendly fashion to get in the front row. What did they want? Donald wondered. Why did they come? Was it only curiosity or were they urged by something deeper,—a hunger, perhaps, for beauty beyond what they knew, a stretching of their cold hands toward a distant flame?

His attention was distracted from them to a little figure standing alone opposite the group through which he had pushed. She was in a dark blue suit. On her head was a soft black hat from beneath which a dark curl had escaped and was whipping against a glowing cheek. She had flung her arm about the pole to which the canvas was attached, and was half turned from him peering up through the darkening arch of awning.

Even so Donald recognized her at once as the Girl in the Shabby Suit, and he almost stopped in his sur-

prise. This girl too! This girl for whom life had seemed so rich and joyous in that moment he had glimpsed her dancing along with the wind. Was she also waiting to catch the crumbs of others' happiness?

The Lady in Gray ahead of him paused and turned. Donald hastened forward, but as he passed the girl she turned her head and gave him a straight look. He gave her back an answering one, and the next instant was guiding the Lady in Gray up the steps of the church, listening to her, but thinking of the girl behind him, and wondered why that single glance, which had said absolutely nothing, could so fill him with interest about her.

Behind him the girl's arm tightened about the pole, and her blue eyes blackened for an instant as a look of pain shot over her face. Here she was again, a peeper-in! She would stand on the sidewalk shivering for an hour before she glimpsed a bit of the loveliness within that had lured her here. Here she was once more, on one side of the social fence, and all that she wanted was on the other,—out of reach. It wasn't fair.

People were crowding in fast now. The girl was shoved and pushed about, but with a stubborn little twist to her mouth she held to her place until almost the last straggler had passed through the swinging doors. Next would come the bridal party, the beautiful girls in their colorful dresses, and the bride, an exquisite vision — It was for these she had waited.

Then faintly through the doors came the deep notes of the organ, and with the sound of the music, the girl

lifted her head, a sense of being cheated out of something to which she had a right, twisting through her like a knife. Beyond those doors was a land of melody and love and beauty. Why couldn't she enter there this once when she so hungered for a glimpse of it? Who was there to mind? Why shouldn't she, this time, do as she had so often dreamed of doing? Why shouldn't she coolly and bravely step past the barrier that kept her out and satisfy her craving? What harm was there?

Her desire mounted in her like a flame, consuming reason, and when two late arrivals, swathed in luxurious furs, hurried past her up the carpeted aisle, the Girl in the Shabby Suit, driven by something stronger than herself, stepped out suddenly and followed a few paces behind them.

A moment later she found herself in the dimness of the vast cathedral just inside the doors. Her heart was pounding and her cheeks were hot, but triumph filled her soul. She stood for a moment in a daze of excitement until two ushers stepped swiftly forward, spoke to the furred ladies in low tones and escorted them down the aisle.

Then abruptly her courage left her. She had fancied she could slip unnoticed into a rear seat. Couldn't she, even now, before those ushers returned, or before these others near by who were looking at her so sharply, approached? The thought of standing up in her shabby clothes beside one of these faultlessly groomed men could not be endured. She *would* slip into a back seat. She took a hesitant step forward.

Instantly, it seemed, she was surrounded by ushers. They flanked her on the left, they closed in on the right, they blocked her way before her, while their slow cool glances told her plainly that they knew she had no business here. She was a stranger, an uninvited guest, an imposter. What would they do to her?

Panic filled her and there was a roaring in her ears through which came the suave tones of a man on her right.

"Friend of the bride?"

The Girl in the Shabby Suit shook her head, her throat too dry for words.

"Friend of the groom?" persisted the same voice.

She shook her head again, feeling like a little animal, hunted down—trapped—— She looked about wildly.

"Give her the bum's rush," came in a whisper from the left.

"Oh—oh—no!" she gasped, and then someone pushed through the group about her, and a friendly voice came to her through the tumult.

"Hello! What's the excitement here?"

"This—lady," drily. "We were wondering where to place her. She says she's not a friend of either the bride or the groom."

The Girl in the Shabby Suit lifted her head and looked squarely into the gray eyes of the fair-haired man who had captured the fugitive hat, and who had given her such an intent glance as he passed her at her post. Would he remember her? Would he save her if he did or was he like these others? She had no idea what a stirring effect the mute appeal of her

white face and frightened eyes was having on him, and the moment was an eternity. Then the miracle happened. Donald put out a hand and took hers, his easy words and gay laugh forcing the others to a surprised retreat.

"But she's a friend of mine!"

He stepped closer, giving her time to recover her composure, for the tears had rushed unexpectedly to her eyes. What a bit of a thing she was! Something about her—her dark fringed blue eyes, perhaps, and her shy little manner,—put him in mind of a violet.

"I'm so glad to see you here," he went on. "Your friend grew tired of waiting so I gave her a seat. I think, though, there's room beside her if you'd care to join her."

The color crept back into the girl's cheeks and a little smile quivered about her lips. She spoke demurely but her glance held an appreciative gleam of humor.

"As long as she's expecting me," she agreed softly.

"Good for you!" Donald whispered. Then he drew her hand through his arm and, like two bold conspirators, they went together down the aisle.

It didn't matter, now, whether her clothes were shabby or not, for Donald's friendliness and sympathy had wrapped her in a new garment. Her head was lifted and her face alight as they marched half-way down the church. Donald kept up the conversation most of the way but suddenly she interrupted him, stumbling over her words, but determined to say them.

"You know,—I *had* to come in—it sounds queer, but it's so—I *had* to. I couldn't help myself."

"I know. It's beautiful in here. Wasn't that it?"

The girl nodded.

"I didn't think anyone would understand. I—I can't begin to thank you."

"I'm glad I was here," he replied simply, and pausing, he gently turned the girl toward a pew. There was a rustling and shifting and then she was seated beside the Lady in Gray who smiled her recognition, while Donald disappeared behind her.

The last of the guests had arrived and the church full of people was waiting for the entrance of the bridal party. Donald joined the ushers at the door to the little room where the procession would form. A rumor went about that the bride had not liked the arrangement of her veil at the last moment and there would be a delay of fifteen minutes. Had anyone heard that, after all, the cuff links were not from Tiffany's? Tiffany boxes but —— Eloquent shrugs completed the malicious dig.

Somehow this little remark, following so close on the heels of their unkindness to the Girl in the Shabby Suit brought back with a rush that familiar contempt for his own kind that Donald had spent so many years trying to conquer. He moved away from the others and stood aloof, staring out over the church with eyes as gray as a stormy sea.

What did it matter where the cuff links came from? Why did they have to be from Tiffany's? What a lot of piffle there was in life and what a disgusting

amount of emphasis was laid on just such bunk as that.

He glanced impatiently out over the scene before him. No expense had been spared to make the setting perfect. Music, flowers, palms, the lighting effect,—all had been carefully planned, yet as the bright spring sunshine streamed in through the richly colored stained windows, Donald fancied it was trying to give something of its warmth and gladness to the coolly ordered interior. And even as it poured its golden light down into the dim church, it seemed to be flung back from the hard gray stone walls, while an icy breath rebuked in a whisper the passionate advances of the dancing sun. Didn't it know that here was no place for heat and brilliant light? Here, always, only cool shadow and a dim diffused radiance of emotion.

Donald frowned, and then wondered quickly if the Girl in the Shabby Suit felt that same way. He hoped not. He hoped she found everything as perfect here as she had expected. What a courageous little thing she was to dare to come in, and how starved for beauty she must have been to do it. He moved a few steps to a place where he could see her lifted profile. In its stillness he read a silent ecstasy and he was glad. It all looked lovely to her because she didn't know, as he did, what lay underneath the loveliness. She didn't know, as he did, that Mack loved Gertrude's money—not her—and that made the whole affair a rotten pretense.

Well, when it came his turn to marry there'd be no mockery about it. Love would pulse through the

church, love would throb in the music, love would glorify the world for others as well as himself. Oh, he'd love all right if he ever found the right girl! The Girl of his Dreams!

The bridal party arrived, bringing with it new and delicate perfumes, the fretful stir over final superficial details, a flutter of excitement and sibilant whispered warnings. Donald, still thinking of the wonder that love might make of his life some day, entered the little room and came face to face with Genevieve Powers, one of the bridesmaids.

She wore a deep yellow gown and a drooping hat of the same color which seemed to enhance the dark beauty of her eyes and hair. She stood, as she so often did, in absolute motionless grace receiving with a lazy smile and bend of her head the compliments that were being showered upon her.

Her eyes touched Donald as he entered, and passed him unseeing. It was like a lash to Donald's pulses. He stepped forward and stopped directly before her, forcing her glance to his.

"You're beautiful, Gen."

The little smile deepened and Genevieve's low laugh sounded through the room, while her eyes mocked him.

"You aren't very original, are you?"

"Possibly not. But at least I'm honest. You're more beautiful than I have ever seen you," he repeated deliberately.

To this Genevieve paid not the slightest attention. Sweeping her train over her arm she passed Donald

with easy grace and took her place in line. But when the ushers led the way out of the tiny room Genevieve's eyes with a little gleam of triumph in their dark depths were on Donald whose broad shoulders and fair head topped all the others.

As she moved down the aisle just ahead of the bride, she was making mental notes of the successes and failures of the affair. The church was too dark, the flowers at each pew a trifle faded. At her wedding—hers and Donald's—everything should be perfect. No matter if she and her mother spent their last cent on it. She'd have enough after she got Donald.

They were at the altar and her eyes rested on him again. He met her look and admiration leaped again to his face. Genevieve hid her pleasure. Donald was difficult—but he was coming!

But though her beauty could make Donald's blood race when he was with her, she could not hold his thoughts long, for when the music hushed and the first of the ancient words sounded slowly through the stillness, he forgot her and listened in growing impatience to the self-conscious careful tones of the bride and the careless answers of the groom.

A farce! The whole spirit of the thing spoiled—and nobody cared but himself. But for him, lonelier at that moment than he had ever been before, the empty beauty of the ceremony was like a little bleeding inside, and he turned from thoughts of the present to thoughts of the future and his own plans.

His complete absorption made him unmindful of everything until he was going back down the aisle

again with Genevieve by his side, and he felt a meaningful pressure of her hand on his arm.

"Don, who in the world is that girl? Right ahead on the aisle seat," he heard her whisper, and his glance fell on the Girl in the Shabby Suit.

"I never saw her before. She's been staring at me frightfully," Genevieve was saying, but Donald scarcely heard a word, for the glimpse he had caught of the little stranger's expression had startled him.

She hadn't known he was looking at her, and in that unguarded moment he had seen her lids droop over a far-away gaze and her mouth twist down in such a look of hopeless longing that Donald missed the rhythm of the slow step, and Genevieve looked at him sharply.

"Do you know her?" she demanded.

"Slightly."

"What's her name?"

But he changed the subject, and all the time he gossiped with the golden girl next him there was a swift undercurrent of deep thought going on within him.

He didn't know her name, but he'd find out. The girl interested him. First her joyousness in the windy street as though life had given her everything. Then the surprise of finding her watching and waiting outside with the others. Later her courage and her helplessness as she stood in the entry. He had thought he had not only saved her embarrassment but had given her what she came for. He knew better now. That look of hers revealed a hunger for something richer.

and deeper in life than mere surface beauty. What was it she wanted and why should she seem so hopeless of getting it?

By the time he helped Genevieve into the waiting limousine with two other bridesmaids he knew he was going back to the Girl in the Shabby Suit. He'd not only find out her name and where she lived but he'd find out what it was she wanted so terribly. Possibly his dream of service for the hungry-hearted people was to begin with her. Perhaps it was for just that she had come into his life to-day.

But by the time he had helped usher the family from the church and had escaped from knots of friends who captured and surrounded him at least three times, the church was half empty. He looked around swiftly, but not a glimpse did he get of the dark little hat shading two deep blue eyes.

She was gone. Vanished as swiftly and mysteriously as she had come.

Donald hurried to the street and scanned the groups of onlookers still lingering on the sidewalk. Then up and down the street, and across its windy width he looked, but the girl had indeed disappeared.

"What does it matter?" said Donald to himself.
"What does it matter? But it does!"

CHAPTER II

GLINT OF GOLD

DONALD'S feeling of utter loneliness in a familiar world, which had overwhelmed him as he stood by the altar in the church, was not a new sensation. He had almost always been lonely, except for a few golden years in his childhood, when his mother, a dimly remembered figure of fragility and fragrance, had given him a complete understanding.

He could recall precious hours by the long chair in her great sunlit room, when he had been content simply to remain quietly in her presence. She was too tired to talk much of the time, but her smile, as he looked up from his childish play on the floor, spoke the volume of her love, and that was enough for him.

Later, when he felt impulses and rebellions and curiosities stirring strangely within him, it was always to her he came because she never laughed if he asked whether the stars had legs, and whether the God within him lived in his stomach. Nor did she scold when he stole away from his nurse, venturing forth with a thrill of fright and pride, alone, and was found bareheaded, uncoated, bereft of roller skates and marbles, playing with dirty ragged urchins who "didn't have all the things he did—and that was why he'd given his away." Her look at him that time had remained long with him, warming his heart in cold, lonely moments, like a loving hand laid over it.

He had, too, sweet memories of sunset stories, of her arm resting like a feather on his shoulders as the two of them sat by the windows overlooking the river, watching the busy boats move constantly up and down its glistening length. It was then, with her tales of the Knights of the Round Table ringing in his ears, and the sight of ships steaming majestically out to sea and far-away lands, that there came to him the first dim realization that his life was his own and he might do with it what he liked. He could travel to distant magic places, too. He could sail out on one of those big boats some day and discover for himself what lay beyond the blue, and he could find—like the Knights of Old—a people in distress, and could, in some strange unimagined way, lighten it for them.

After his mother slipped away, leaving him, fatherless from the time of his birth, to live out the years in the big house with the remote figure of his grandfather, his loneliness had driven him to various extremities. In the first year he sought the companionship of the servants, finding in their mature sympathy the solace that his boy companions could not give. And in exchange for that he returned a loyal friendship which recognized no class distinctions.

He could have been seen at the age of seven carefully wiping dishes for Katie whose rheumatic old back was her constant misery. Or he would hurry after pretty Marie who whisked dust cloths with such airy grace through the big rooms. On nice days he would be found sitting in the front seat of the automobile conversing with William who was doing errands about

the city. But his favorite pal was Dobson the butler, whose English accent, coupled with his strange yarns about the sea, completely fascinated the lad. Many a gloomy wintry afternoon was spent in the big hall before a leaping fire, where Dobson, lured on by the child's rapt attention, heaped fact on fancy and fancy on fact until it is to be questioned which was enjoying the gallop of an unbridled imagination more.

By the time Donald was eight he had made other friends. He was to be found, these days, in the neighboring back yards of all the large homes, playing marbles with the stable boys, instead of attending the dancing classes of the sons and daughters of the owners of the place. It was he who first organized the "gang" and became pitcher for a baseball team of the rowdiest children on the block and it was not until then that his grandfather became aware of him as a factor to be given grave consideration.

The old gentleman entered his house one afternoon to meet an unaccustomed sight. In the big hall were scattered baseball bats and gloves, dirty caps and torn sweaters. The beautiful Chinese rugs bore the muddy imprint of many small feet while the polished hardwood floor had patently been discovered to be an ideal skating rink.

A babel of noise drew him to the dining-room door where he beheld his grandson dispensing delicacies with a generosity that was truly admirable to a mob of greedy boys who were gobbling down the food with a scornful disregard for forks and spoons.

He called Donald to him.

"Who are these boys?" he demanded, his deep voice falling heavily into the sudden silence following his appearance.

Donald faced his grandfather, feet widely apart and his head flung back in defiance.

"They're my pals!"

For a moment the old man stared down into the blazing eyes of the boy, then he turned abruptly on his heel.

"Pals! Animals!" he muttered to himself.

The direct result of this incident was the sending away of Donald to a school attended by the sons of rich gentlemen. He was there for four years, following which came a "prep" school of high standing, and at the age of sixteen he graduated with a record of which even his grandfather was secretly very proud.

Donald wanted, of course, to go to college and the matter was turned over in his grandfather's mind for a long time. A self-made man himself, he held openly a quick, easy scorn for culture. But certain occasions in the early part of his career, when he had experienced severe embarrassment because of his own lack of education, had remained in his memory, rankling through the years. Donald should be spared that at any rate, and it was probable that four years of contact with men of all kinds would sharpen his perceptions and give him invaluable experience for his later career in dealing with important figures in the financial world.

So Donald went. And his early years at preparatory school made easier his way at college, but it was

not his school record, or whispered word of his wealth, as much as his own warm and generous personality that brought him at once into the foreground, and quickly won him friendships. Shortly he stood in line for class honors and was elected to clubs and a fraternity.

It was then that Donald became sharply differentiated from those about him. He was indifferent to the applause given him and concerned only over the bitterness of his less fortunate associates. When he discovered himself at class elections, running for office against boys to whom public praise and approval meant everything, he quietly withdrew his name. When he saw the injustice of the fraternity system he resigned his membership. And he found himself, in his simple explanation that it "didn't matter enough to him, and it did to the other fellows," met by the incomprehending fury of those of his own caste.

Didn't matter! How could it help but matter? The biggest things in college coming his way and he was turning them down! It was bewildering and maddening to everyone but himself. To him it was so clear. Other people didn't have things—other people as deserving. Why should he? Or—other people wanted these things more than he did. His empty place gave someone else a coveted opportunity. So simple, yet apparently so complex. He puzzled over their inability to understand and moved on his way through college, a beloved, admired, perplexing figure, persistently sought after and reluctantly left alone.

But it was in his third year that he drew the great-

est attention to himself. For, following the biggest football game of the year, there appeared in the college paper a scorching article, fearlessly signed with Donald's full name, in which he condemned the captain, the coach and the system for permitting the dirty work that had given the college its victory. When this was picked up by newspapers all over the country Donald found himself with many enemies and a very few friends. For a while his sudden overthrow from a place of high approval embittered him, but ultimately the hurt only served to strengthen his belief in justice for all in everything, and gave him the final push toward joining a club of flaming Socialists.

In his summer vacations he travelled, seeing the world as full of people hungry for the things he had in such abundance. Fastidiousness kept him from coming to grips with reality, so he went about, an untouched observer, looking with pity and gentleness at the strugglers. To him, the restlessness that lay in the eyes of people was attributable to the wrong condition of economic affairs, and his youthful idealism and optimism prevented his looking deeper into their hearts. Gradually a dream of service for the empty-handed of mankind, the seed of which had been sown in his boyhood by his mother's side, stirred and grew within him through the years. He would, himself, with the wealth that would some day be his, even up things.

But after college Donald realized that a mist of uncertainty clouded his purpose, and until he could present his visionary scheme as a practical plan to his

eminently materialistic grandfather, he had better keep it to himself. The thought of working had occurred to Donald but had been laid aside, because it seemed clear to him that his usefulness lay along other lines. With his usual simplicity he argued that there was no sense in his working to make money when there was already so much accumulated for him. And there was no sense in working for the mere idea of working when all the worthy causes which had come to his attention needed financial rather than personal support. So he spent his days puzzling over the way to make his own niche in the world and—in between his earnest hours of thought—he enjoyed himself as a rich and attractive young man would.

But as a year reached its close Donald became restless and dissatisfied with his life. Satisfying as athletics were, and pleasurable as he found his popularity, it was after all an idle and selfish existence, and he finally reached the point where he decided to talk with his grandfather, let it bring what disastrous results it might.

The relationship between Donald and his grandfather might have been said to exist in the boy's mind only, for he felt no stir of affection in his heart. To him the old gentleman was a stranger whose apparent indifference to the welfare of his grandson gave rise to a stiff unrecognized resentment in the lad. On the few occasions when he saw him, Donald's sensitive nature led him to give back exactly in proportion as he received, and Mr. McIntyre's brief curt manner, hiding none too well an habitual and characteristic

disapproval, closed Donald in on himself. The older man's brief speech had a curiously paralyzing effect on the boy, so that in the shadow of his powerful personality, Donald's natural gaiety and fluent ease vanished, and he became inarticulate and hesitant. It seemed to him that those piercing eyes stripped the coverings from his mind and held up his young ideas, like naked children, to shiver in the cold breath of his scorn. Whenever it was possible he was non-committal, and as soon as he could manage, he escaped from the room.

But the time had come when he must face an interview with old Mr. McIntyre, so, the day before the wedding, just after his return from a house-party in an Adirondack "camp," Donald was in his room planning a conversation with the formidable old man. He wanted to marshall his thoughts into line and present them in trim ordered array for inspection before the old gentleman's quick glance could thrust like a sword among them, scattering them in rout.

Then came a knock at his door and Dobson appeared, bringing a reply to Donald's request for an interview.

"Mr. McIntyre will see you at once, sir."

"All right, Dobson," Donald flung over his shoulder, and Dobson, bent and gray, bowed and withdrew, leaving Donald frowning out upon the river scene before him. A moment later, however, he was leaping down the stairs two steps at a time after Dobson.

"It's good to have you in the house again, sir," Dobson ventured, as Donald paused at the foot of the

stairs. "Makes it sort of—come alive—as you might say."

Donald glanced back down the hall.

It was large and empty and still. Except for a hand-carved wooden bench, beside which stood an enormous Sèvres jar, and two hand-carved chairs at either side of the fireplace at the further end, there was no furniture in the room. But up and down the walls huge portraits of the McIntyre ancestors looked in silence out of great dark frames, and as Donald's glance passed swiftly over all of them it seemed to him that the eyes of each one were focussed on him and on Dobson. He turned to the servant, his gay laugh ringing out suddenly.

"Seems to me, Dobson, with all these people here, it's always alive, isn't it? Look at 'em! They're just ready to speak."

Dobson's manner became cautious, as he leaned toward Donald confidentially.

"That's what I mean, sir. They come alive when you're here. They seem to follow you. Up and down—and in and out. And when you're gone they're jest—jest—picters again."

Donald laughed again.

"Dobson! what an idea!"

Then, taking another look at the grim old pictures, he sobered suddenly and thrusting his hands in his pockets he walked slowly up and down before them.

It *was* a queer idea, but perhaps there was something in it, after all. Certainly they all seemed to be "alive" now, following him with cold glances as he

passed before them. Appraising—disapproving—measuring—disapproving. Disapproving—disapproving—disapproving. All of them! Every last one of these, his father's people. Well, let them! He didn't belong to them, anyway. These were his father's people. He was like his mother's. At any rate, he was what he was, whether they liked it or not.

He knocked at the heavy oak door of his grandfather's study and entered the beautiful old room, mellow with antique furniture and ancient rugs. Mr. McIntyre's narrow figure was sunk into a deep leather chair before a window. The late sunset, sending its clear light between the curtains, rested unkindly on the old man, revealing pitilessly the scars of a long battle with life, but there was a dignity about his grim strength, even though there appeared to be no gentleness, and something admirable about the quick, sharp way he snapped out his words.

"Well, so you're just home from the mountains."

"Yes, sir."

"Have a nice time?"

"Thanks, fine."

The old man's eyes passed up and down the length and strength of the stalwart lad before him, and a fierce affection flared up in his ancient heart, because Donald belonged to him. His secret desire was for the continuance of the family, and his private passion a pride in his name, and the boy who was to pass it on. But these facts he had always hidden, for they seemed to him to show a weakness in his nature.

Long years he had waited for Donald to grow up,

watching with unspoken anxiety the boy's development, and observing with an increasing satisfaction that the queer dreaminess so marked in his boyhood entirely vanished during his teens. He saw Donald now, standing at the threshold of manhood, showing at present no special ability for anything but athletics and making friends. It was time, he had decided, for the boy to come to a consideration of his responsibilities as the heir to a vast fortune.

Mr. McIntyre waved Donald to a chair. There was a little silence during which the familiar confusion, for which Donald scorned himself, settled upon him, while he felt for the best way to open the conversation. Unexpectedly his grandfather helped him.

"You've played for a whole year. Now what do you intend to do?"

The clock in the corner struck six deep sonorous notes and the big dog, lying by the desk, stirred uneasily in his sleep. Then the room was still again except for the steady ticking away of the moments while Donald tried to form a sound and sensible answer.

"Haven't you any idea of working?" was shot at him suddenly before he could reply.

"Working? You mean ——"

"I mean that no grandson of mine shall idle."

Donald flushed and answered abruptly.

"I don't want to idle. I'm ready to work. I've been thinking about it for a long time."

"What sort of work?"

The dreaded moment had come. Donald drew a

long breath and plunged in, for he knew that postponement only made a difficult matter harder. And as he talked, eagerly, rapidly, passionately, it seemed to him as though his rush of words rebounded like balls and went rolling away in a silence and were lost. It seemed to him as though he were pushing uselessly with all his strength against a high, thick wall, trying in vain to find a weak place where he might enter. And it struck him suddenly as rather dreadful that this should be so, that he should be so shut away from the only person in the world to whom he was related. He and his grandfather were worse than strangers, for there was in the room an atmosphere not only of solid resistance but of active enmity. Yet he struggled on.

"I'm not thinking of work as you have known it, Grandfather. You began when you were in your teens,—as an office boy. You had to. I don't. And I'm not thinking of business as you think of it now for me, either. Wall Street and the Stock Exchange, the banks and big corporations—they don't interest me at all."

"What does?"

Donald's words leaped out. He leaned forward, his elbows on his knees.

"People. Life. The justice and injustice of it! Injustice! There's so much wrought out before our eyes! Some of it can't be helped, but a lot of it can. I don't want to pile up more money for myself. Why should I? I've seen everything, had everything, done everything. I don't want to pile up more money, I tell you. I want to use what I've got!"

"How?"

"I don't know how! But I'll find a way! I'll find a way to divide up what we've got so that more people get fair chances!"

"What do you mean—'get fair chances'? Everybody has the same chance of making good."

"Everybody hasn't! You know it! Some people are handicapped by illness, some people by poverty, others are held down by inherited weakness which they might outgrow in new environments. Some only need a little encouragement and help. Others need a great deal——"

"I was weak and sick—but I fought my way to the top."

"—over other people. Don't I know? You do, too. This is what I mean. What is one man's gain is another man's loss. You've been fair to yourself but you haven't been fair to other people because you *haven't let yourself think of them.*"

Donald paused for a moment and then rushed on.

"Oh, I know what you're going to say! You paid a big enough price for the oil lands you discovered! And you paid fair enough wages to the men who worked for you! But other people's dreams had to be sacrificed when they were working to realize yours. So don't you see? This money you've made isn't *yours*. It isn't mine. It belongs to everybody. You were just lucky in the beginning. And the fact that you've proved yourself abler in holding it and making more out of it only increases your responsibility. You're the custodian of wealth that you've got to give

back. If you leave it to me I've got to do the same thing!"

The old man sat in absolute stillness for a second, listening to his castle fall crashing about his ears. This, his grandson! This giant of a man possessed of the mind of a baby! Donald, who was to be ready now to crack hard skulled heads together, babbling softly of philanthropy! Donald, wanting to scatter broadcast the wealth he had spent a lifetime gathering! It was unbelievable.

For, while Donald saw the world peopled with folk who held up their hands in silent supplication, Mr. McIntyre saw those same hands grasping greedily for wealth which they had made no effort to gather for themselves. He had fought so long against avarice and cunning that the wells of pity were dried up in him, and at sixty-five the idealism that burned so strongly in all youth—especially in this lad before him—seemed to him a mixture of incomprehensible ignorance and despicable softness. To see it emerging in this boy, who was dearer to him than anything in the world and about whom all his plans for the future had centered, filled him with sudden fury. It was not for that he had sent him to college! His voice, cracking with his emotion, held unspeakable contempt.

"Bah! You talk like a baby!"

Donald sprang to his feet.

"Sit down. Sit down," the old man said testily.

For a moment they measured each other in silence. Donald spoke first, trying to be reasonable, to make

clear to the old man what was so plain to him. On his ability to do that hung all his life's hopes and plans. He sat forward in his chair, one hand outstretched, pleadingly.

"What's the sense, Grandfather, in having as much as we have, if we don't give some to people who haven't? If we don't make the world happier for those who haven't happiness? Isn't that, really, all that money is for?"

"I give away a great many thousands each year. Don't you realize that?" Ill-concealed impatience was manifest in the nervous gesturing of his hands.

"Yes, but that's organized charity. What I meant was something more personal ——"

"I didn't begin giving it away until I'd made it, however."

For a moment he sat glaring at his grandson. Then, pounding on the arm of his chair, he lashed Donald with a tongue of biting scorn while Donald, white faced and sick at heart, only half heard as the realization came to him that the secret dream of his heart was swept away on the torrents of his grandfather's wrath. No use now to expect help from this quarter. Whatever he did of service would have to be done with his own two hands. Whatever beauty he rendered must be conceived first in his own mind and with difficulty given to others. And what could he do alone? What use were his hands and his head? It wasn't *he* that was needed. It was his money. He set his teeth. He must have the free use of money to do what he wanted to do, and that his grandfather was

refusing him. He turned an angry gaze on the old figure, whose last words came clearly to him.

"I don't know what to do with you. You've had your head in the clouds ever since you were a youngster. I've put you through school and through college. I've waited eight years for you to show a little common sense. And you turn out to be a dreamer. A good-for-nothing dreamer who's going to make over this rotten old world with a pretty idea and some gold. Bah!"

Donald got to his feet. His voice was quiet, his hot gaze steady.

"There's no need to continue this discussion. You see things one way, I see them another. That's all there is to it. You've lived your life as you wanted to. Now I'll do the same thing. Good-afternoon."

Gray eyes met gray eyes. Then into the older pair came a keen calculating look as Donald turned toward the door.

"Wait a minute."

For a moment there was silence in the room while Donald, his hand on the knob, waited for what was to come. Mr. McIntyre's eyes almost shut in his meditation, but through his half closed lids he was watching the boy before him. He had spirit. Plenty of fight in him and courage. Sound morally. And a good head. Just lacked a sense of proportion. Experience, after all, was the best teacher, and Donald had been shielded from it. Perhaps it was his own fault. Perhaps he shouldn't have gone to college. At any rate, let him learn now. Give him a chance —

Slowly the old man drew his cheque book from his drawer, made out a cheque, tore it from the book and then, with his gray head lifted, he made Donald the longest speech of his life.

"There's this about money. You are smart enough to make it—or you are not. After you've made it you are smart enough to keep it—or you are not. You don't appear to be either smart enough to make it or keep it. But there is always a chance in life. A chance that you may be mistaken. I'm going to take that chance, though I have never before invested in an uncertainty. I have never pinned my money or my faith on people. Don't believe in it. The risk is out of all proportion. But this seems to me, now, the only fair way."

His gaze seemed to draw them closer together until Donald, staring at him, listening, fancied he was looking into only one large bright eye.

"Here's fifty thousand dollars." Without moving his eyes from Donald he shoved the cheque toward him. "This is the twenty-third of March. You have a year in which to do with this what you want. You have everything and need nothing. You may, therefore, by a streak of luck I have no hope of, use this wisely." He paused, then went on with heavy sarcasm: "And take my advice. Cut out philanthropy 'til you've learned the value of money. Charities are a luxury, to be indulged in only by the experienced. They pay no interest, except in ingratitude and disillusionment. Break into business, if you wish. Any business. And if you need advice about securities of

any kind, information about oil wells or anything else, come to me. That's all."

"You mean," Donald said, with an eagerness that was like a rising flame in him, "you mean this fifty thousand dollars is all mine, to spend as I please?"

His grandfather's eyes narrowed.

"You've already learned how to spend very well indeed. I said use, not spend. However, I put no strings on you." He paused a moment, then added: "But it seems only fair to explain that if you cannot give a satisfactory account of how this has been disposed of,—satisfactory in my opinion I mean,—if there is nothing concrete to show for it by the end of the year, my fortune will be left—to you, of course—but safely tied up in trust funds. You will be able to spend nothing without the approval of my Trustees, who will be practical business people. Do you understand?"

Donald rose, thrust the cheque into his coat pocket, and stood for a moment looking at his grandfather. Then he nodded curtly.

"Yes, I understand. Thank you. And I'll satisfy us both."

CHAPTER III

A STRANGE BUSINESS

DONALD saw the Lady in Gray moving through the crowd in the big reception hall, but it was half an hour before he could make his escape from the bridal party to join her. And then she was nowhere to be seen.

With a feeling of deep irritation he at last took up his stand before a group of palms opposite the entrance. The Girl in the Shabby Suit had gotten away—twice now. Had the Lady in Gray escaped him too? Well, he would remain here until the last guest departed. If she had not already gone she could not leave without his seeing her, for she would have to pass him on the way out.

His desire to talk with her was now doubled. Aside from her own personal charm which had made him feel that she could understand and help him in his dream of service, she held another interest. For she had sat next to the Girl in the Shabby Suit all through the wedding. It was reasonable to believe that she had discovered the girl's name and could tell it to Donald. At any rate it was a possibility which he could not overlook, for the pain he had glimpsed in the girl's eyes that brief moment as he passed her had been a clear call to him. He must discover who she was and know the reason for it.

"And now that you have helped get them married, are you wondering how long they will stay that way?"

The low voice, holding a suggestion of a laugh in it, made him turn eagerly.

"It is a question these days, isn't it?" he agreed, taking the Lady in Gray by the arm and leading her to an isolated spot at the far end of the large reception hall.

"A question usually settled soon—and one way, I've noticed. Marriage is like a laborer's day—having shorter hours and larger pay all the time. Ah, this is nice."

Donald had found a cushioned retreat where the blare of music and noise of laughter and voices came, softened by distance, to their ears. The corner was shielded by a half-folded screen and two or three palms from the rest of the room, and she nodded approvingly up at him.

"Nice," she repeated, smiling. "We can talk with freedom and in privacy. Sit here—opposite,—so I can see if you are telling me the truth."

He sank into the low chair.

"Do you doubt that I would—so soon?"

"It's wise to doubt everything and everybody, I've discovered. Then you're never disappointed."

But he took this seriously.

"I couldn't go through life that way," he said, shaking his head.

"You're young, but you'll learn."

"I've got lots to learn, but when I can't trust my fellow men, life isn't worth living."

She laughed lightly.

"You look almost tragic. It doesn't pay, Mr. McIntyre. You must laugh—at everything."

"Then I shall laugh at that," he told her. "It is so impossible it is absurd."

But she shook her head at him in pity.

"You are going to be hurt. Badly hurt," she said solemnly.

"Am I? Is this the lifting of the veil? You promised to shed light on my future, you know." He leaned forward, stretching out his hand, palm upward. "Go on."

She bent over it.

"There is someone," she began, "someone who fills your thoughts constantly."

"How did you know I've thought of no one but you since I met you?" he murmured.

But at that she flung his hand from her in mock disdain, refusing absolutely to listen to his pleadings for further revelations.

"No," severely. "No more. You aren't respectful. You are laughing at me. You aren't believing anything I say."

"'It's wise to doubt everything and everybody,'" he reminded her slyly. "And I must laugh—at everything. Because I have learned so quickly, is it fair to punish me?"

"You are incorrigible."

His gay laugh rang out suddenly and she sat back twinkling, then there was the briefest pause, during which the Lady in Gray studied him with growing

interest. From the first moment of seeing Donald as he stood with the sunlight gleaming on his bare head in the wind-swept street, and with the eagerness of his spirit plainly reflected in his eyes, she had felt he was a person about whom one might weave a story.

"He's a little different," she thought now. "A dear boy. Not like these others. How does he happen to travel with them? And what is it he wants to talk about with me to-day?"

She was just going to ask him when Donald leaned forward and spoke with impetuous sincerity.

"I'm so glad I found you."

"But I found you."

"Out there," he conceded. "But in the beginning ——"

"Ah, no, you can't claim that you found me then, either. My hat blew off and you caught it, that was all. It was mere chance."

"It was Fate," he told her, seriously. "I've been hunting for a person like you for years."

"Yes? And now that you've found me ——"

Donald hesitated, then went directly to the heart of the matter.

"First, I want to talk to you about the Girl in the Shabby Suit."

The Lady in Gray nodded.

"What was her name? Do you know?"

She shrugged.

"My dear boy, I haven't the faintest idea."

For all he tried, he couldn't quite conceal his disappointment.

"But I thought—I hoped —— You sat next to her and were talking ——"

"Yes."

"And you don't know."

It fell with such heaviness from his lips that the Lady in Gray checked her impulse to tease and asked instead a gentle question.

"Does it make any great difference?"

"Why—yes. To me it does." Donald gave the Lady in Gray a swift, searching look and then with sudden decision he flung constraint aside. He had wanted to talk with her, had sought her with that intention,—now he would. He began by telling about the girl's entrance into the church.

"Of course, she shouldn't have done it," he concluded. "She wasn't an invited guest. But she wanted to see beauty so badly that she dared. At least, I thought that was what she wanted until I passed her on the way out. Then I caught a look in her eyes ——"

He paused, at a loss for words. The Lady in Gray waited silently.

"It was just a flash—she didn't know I saw—but there was a deeper hunger—a greater want —— Seeing the wedding hadn't satisfied her, I mean."

"And so you wish to see her again and find out what it was she did want."

"Yes, and give it to her!"

Donald caught himself and stopped, but there was a reassuring quality in the attention the Lady in Gray was giving him, so that, leaning forward again, he

went on, hesitantly at first, but gathering courage as he talked.

"Because—this is what I mean. People can want things out of all proportion to the importance of the things they want. Sometimes getting these things straightens life out for them. I've seen it happen. I've seen fellows at college crazy—simply *crazy*—to get an office or make a club, nearly flunking out till they do. And when they get it, they're all right again—usually." He paused. "I—I have sort of a queer idea along those lines which I hope to work out some day."

"Almost everybody's ideas are queer to everyone but themselves," she said quietly. "But I like to hear them all. And the queerer, the better. Just what is yours?"

Meeting her ready sympathy, Donald leaped on the back of his hobby horse and went galloping away. He told her all that he had told his grandfather, but he told it at greater length and with more passion, this time, for he was surer of his audience. And as he talked, with the high color in his face and his gray eyes, burning with a strange, steady light, the Lady in Gray listened, spellbound.

It was old stuff, she knew. Just youth crying its need and desire for a perfect world. Hopeful youth, inexperienced youth, blind and beautiful youth. But somehow it gripped her. A word, or a laugh would have stopped him, but she could give neither. She merely sat listening, with a curious little twist in her heart.

"Things aren't divided up fairly," he ended. "Some of us have so much more than others. I've always had more than my share and I—well—my idea is to square matters."

"But how?"

The simple question had an unexpected effect. For Donald tipped back his head and laughed gaily.

"That's exactly what my grandfather asked," he explained. "And when I tried to tell him he said I had a perfect plan for 'disorganized charity'!"

"I think I'd be inclined to agree with your grandfather," the Lady in Gray said, smilingly. "Your idea is all right, but I don't see how you can put it over in this world."

"But why can't I? If it's a good idea, there must be a way."

"Human nature, dear boy, and economic conditions. You've left them both out of your reckoning. And they are always there,—factors you can't change."

"But present conditions aren't meeting those two factors now as they should be met. It isn't a satisfactory world for the majority of people as things are. Why not try something else?"

The Lady in Gray shrugged, but in spite of her attitude and words, there remained still a quality of tender understanding in her glance and Donald rushed on, letting his words come pell-mell.

"Dreams! Why, you know and I know that more than half of life is made up of them. And less than half ever come true. All because of luck. It is luck that Grandfather stumbled on oil wells and as a con-

sequence I've had everything I wanted. Yet what have I done to deserve so much? Nothing! And other people toil all their lives for miserable bits of pleasure. It's not fair. Don't you see it's not?"

"What a Socialist you are."

"Admitted." Donald drew a long breath and leaned back in his chair. "Thank you for not laughing at me," he ended quietly.

"I can't laugh at you when I'm sorry for you."

"Why in the world are you sorry for me?"

"Because you're not on the earth with the rest of us. You're going to be lonely, and you've got a long way to fall."

For a moment Donald's steady glance met hers, then he looked thoughtfully out of the window behind the Lady in Gray. The sound of her words faded as the echo of his own still rang in his head. "Dreams!—half of life is made up of them—and less than half come true."

There was a thought behind this, but it eluded him. He frowned, and then slowly his face cleared. The Lady in Gray, watching, saw that order was coming out of the chaos of Donald's mind. Something definite and clear cut was taking shape. While to Donald it was no less than a miracle that the little seed, struggling in the darkness of his mind for so many years, had flowered suddenly into a plan in the sunshine of sympathy.

He turned to her, speaking with a new seriousness. The flaming fanatic with his vague hopes and idle dreams was gone. Here was a purposeful man.

"You needn't be sorry for me. And I'm not going to be hurt. But I *am* going to do what no one else has ever done."

He looked so tremendously sure that the Lady in Gray, who knew the world better than he, felt a compassionate fear for him sweep over her. Absurd! What was he to her? Nothing. Why should she have this feeling about him? Nevertheless she could not help but ask curiously:

"What are you going to do?"

"I'm going into the Business of Making Dreams Come True." His tone was cool and deliberate. "It's just come to me. I've never been able to say it before. I've been trying to make something too elaborate out of it, when it's really so simple. I'm going to make people's dreams come true."

The Lady in Gray wondered for a wild moment if she were living in a fairy tale. She wanted to laugh, but she couldn't do that, for laughter would be a cruel betrayal of his confidence. She looked at him curiously and saw that he was deadly serious, and a feeling of helplessness in the strange situation overwhelmed her. His glance was level, yet he had uttered mad words. He had told her the wildest nonsense she had ever heard. Nonsense which somehow seemed to hold a bit of solid truth—or was it just his steadily burning belief in his idea that made her think that? Nonsense, of course. Her idea of its being at all sensible was due to his personal charm. It had cast a spell over her. Nonsense, entirely, but she couldn't be the one to tell him.

"The Business of Making Dreams Come True," he repeated. "Why don't you say something?"

There were many things the Lady in Gray had thought of to say. Sharp little nipping sentences, cruel little jabs,—honest enough, all of them—but none of them were said. She only shook her head.

Donald pulled out his cigarettes and slowly lighted one.

"I've travelled all over the world," he said. "And everywhere I have gone I've found hungry hearts aching for a bit of beauty—or wisdom—or recklessness. I've seen natures warped and lives twisted out of shape over the need for self-denial. What's the use? I want to know these people. I want to find out what it is they want. And then I want to see that they get it."

"If wishes were horses!" the Lady in Gray said in a non-committal tone.

"Beggars might ride." Donald leaned forward in his quick, eager way. "That's just it, exactly, they're going riding——"

He stopped and a shade of disappointment passed over his face.

"What?" she asked.

He smiled ruefully.

"The Girl in the Shabby Suit was to be the first."

"I see. Well, there are others."

"But I don't know any others. She was going to introduce me to them. She must know—dozens."

Without reminding him that he didn't really know the Girl in the Shabby Suit, Jane said lightly:

"Oh, if that's all you want—a list of prospective—"

er—clients, shall we call them,—I can supply you with half a dozen myself.”

“You can?”

She gave prompt assurance, in some surprise and annoyance at herself. For here she was, doing just what she had determined never to do, what she had always succeeded in avoiding. She was letting a passing attraction draw her into an affair that could not possibly be anything but a ridiculous failure. And she didn't like to be connected with anything that was ridiculous or that might fail.

But she had done it now, and the lighting up of Donald's face was already reward enough for her secret misgivings. She comforted herself further by assuring herself that she was committed to nothing, really, and it would be more than interesting to watch Donald's development under the trials that he would inevitably meet. In this frame of mind she took the reins of conversation into her hands again, reinstating herself in her own self-respect, by a return to her usual manner.

“You shall meet them casually at tea,” she said. “And then you shall do with them what you like. I live in Greenwich Village,” she went on. “That may subtract from the respectability in which my newspaper wraps me, but as I have two trees in my back yard, I purpose to remain there. Besides, respectability isn't, I find, a great asset to the pleasures of life.”

The mood of the hour was changed and Donald met her light gay cynicism as easily as she had met his seriousness.

"What is?" he asked laughingly.

"A sense of humor. Have you it? You'll need it in your 'Business.' Also the realization that one's greatest pleasure lies in anticipation of an event," she answered, her eyes twinkling with mischief.

"Is that a warning for me?"

"If you want to take it so, but I doubt if you will."

"You doubt many things, I suspect."

"Cynics have that habit."

"But cynicism is only a shield with you. And I've seen behind it."

"My dear boy," the Lady in Gray said briskly, "don't mistake my understanding for sympathy. It would be a pity, indeed, if I had lived so long and couldn't follow your thoughts as you gave them to me. But as to sharing your hopes — I'm too great a skeptic for that."

"You will lead me to the door and shove me through —" he accused her.

"And watch you stumble on your way," she ended cheerfully.

"Cruel! And will you laugh at me as I go?"

"No. I may be just foolish enough to worry about you."

"That's nice. But I wish you'd worry a little about the Girl in the Shabby Suit."

"Why?"

"The memory of her bothers me. I can't forget that look. If you'd worry with me, we might, together, find a way to get hold of her again."

"She doesn't concern me greatly. And she needn't

you, either. She has a rather marvellous resiliency of spirit, I think, that enables her to adjust herself to life."

"What an uncanny gift reporters have! You knew all about me—and now you know all about her. Tell me what else you can about her."

Perceiving that he wanted to talk about her, the Lady in Gray decided to satisfy him.

"She's an idealist, too. I knew it from the moment I saw her. Anyone who could wrest pleasure out of such weather as this is to-day can be nothing else. She was getting something out of it which wasn't there. She was actually putting it there herself, with the sheer force of her desire for it. It is, you know, a cold, dusty, disagreeable day, and that's *all* it is."

"But there were moments when it was a great deal more. When you felt the promise of Spring in the air. It was these moments she was enjoying."

"That's it. She refused to recognize that Spring makes promises every year, and every year fails to keep them."

Donald leaned back and folded his arms, while she rattled on in a cool, gay voice. He smiled with her and at her until she neared the end, then something within him shrank.

"Spring's promise is perpetual," the Lady in Gray said. "She holds out a hope of unfailing beauty and undying loveliness. And just as she is most riotously extravagant in her phrases, flinging forth fragrance and blossoms and golden sunlight until you believe in her implicitly, she slips from sight. And then what

happens? The dry, dusty heat of summer. The dismal, dreary rattle of fall. And the bleak barrenness of winter. Spring is like all the other exquisite things in life. Like love, like wealth, like success—holding out promises of eternal joy and—cheating every time. Ah! Now that hurts you.”

But it was not the meeting of these thoughts which hurt, for Donald had had a few such himself. It was hearing them spoken. Disappointments once admitted, seemed to become so much more real and enormous. Truths which had never been given standing room could be staved off. Donald had his doubts of many things, but he was young enough to want to believe in love and success. However, instead of replying to her words, he made bold answer to the cheerful indifference in her tone.

“And you are the greatest cheat of all when you talk like that, for anyone with eyes as young as yours hasn’t a heart and mind as old as you are pretending to have. You don’t believe half you say.”

“Nor half anyone else says, nice boy,” she laughed.

And then, abruptly a dowager appeared, a monstrous, terrifying creature, an imposing figure of large proportions, whose haughty gray head and dominating eye struck terror to servants and social climbers. Accustomed to command, and possessed of a fearless tongue and a cool courage, she purposed to kill this presumptuous outsider with a glance, capture Donald, and drag him back to her neglected and forgotten daughter, Genevieve.

But the Lady in Gray was not easily cowed, and

she gave dignity to Donald's departure by delaying him long enough to slip into his hand a card on which was engraved:

"JANE HARCOURT,
16 West 11th St.,
New York City."

And down in one corner in her own backward handwriting had been added:

"Tea at four, Sunday."

CHAPTER IV

HUNGRY HEARTS

JANE HARCOURT moved busily about her small apartment Sunday afternoon, making ready for her guests. She covered the cake with a fresh napkin and closed it behind the doors to the kitchenette. Then she went to the shelves in the corner of the room, pulled apart the tiny curtains, and took out her china. A gay little song rose to her lips. Hearing it herself, she stopped abruptly, then went on thoughtfully about her work.

How long since she had sung like that? How long since she had planned a party with such pleasure in the planning? How long since she had felt such excitement over anyone's coming as she did over Donald's? Her cool detachment in a well-ordered life hadn't forsaken her since she could remember. Why was she different to-day? What was the matter with her anyway?

Looking back over the years, she saw herself left alone in her early twenties with her way to make in the world. She had leaped hungrily at her freedom, happy to have at last the chance to do what she longed to do. By the time she was thirty she was firmly established on the staff of one of the big newspapers of the city and was planning for the day when she would be a free-lance writer. When she was forty her goal was nearly reached. One book published and

fairly well received. Another under way—and nice requests from editors —

It had been on her fortieth birthday,—a recent event,—that she had had the acute realization she had missed something in life. Friends she had a-plenty, for her gentle humor and her sympathy made a wonderful combination that drew men and women both to her side. Work that she loved was hers. And a future, holding out bright promises of financial success and fame. Still something was lacking. At that time she dismissed the idea with an impatient shrug. Something *was* lacking, but what was the good of coddling the thought?

Now to-day, as she moved about the little apartment, the realization came to her again, and she paused this time to face it fairly.

She was forty,—and love had passed her by. Forty—with no aching sweetness in life. Forty—yet she had no vivid memory of either exquisite pain or pleasure. Forty. A fairly successful free-lance writer—without ties—not needed anywhere—yet—she admitted it with grim humor—she had a stifled hunger for motherhood that years of living had never eased.

She moved to her casement windows and stood looking out at David and Jonathan—her beloved trees. They nodded gently to her but Jane's unseeing eyes scarcely noticed. She was in a rare mood for Jane. Her composure was gone and deep within her was a surging rebellion that threatened a tide of tears. Ridiculous! Self-pity. How she loathed it. She tossed her head and moved away.

But she could not get away from her feelings. It was disturbing to find them still stirred up. She went back to the windows and thought the thing through to the end, for it was the only way to clear it up.

Donald had done it. Donald had made her sing as she prepared the party for him. Donald had made her weep—almost—as she stood here in her loneliness. Donald, with his red rebellion against an unfair world and his golden dream of service. Donald with his love of life and his courage, his sweetness and his untried strength. Donald ——

A curious little spasm of pain contracted Jane's face for a moment. Then she spoke aloud, softly:

"Donald—the son of my dreams."

After she had said it she despised herself. It was just that sort of thing from which she had always kept herself clear. Sentiment! Sentimentality! One was as bad as the other. All her life she had scorned the people who fed on either, yet here she was, like any other fat-headed old woman, whispering saccharine nonsense tearfully to herself!

"Fat! Forty! And a fool!" was her harsh mental comment.

Her moment of weakness gone, she turned briskly to the tea-table, glancing over it for a last inspection. Everything was ready. It was really to be the nicest party she had ever given.

For there were to be fluffy biscuits on her silver dishes, and hot tea served in her beautiful old-fashioned china tea set, and salted almonds, browned to a delicious crispness in butter, and the sponge cake that

never failed her. There was to be a fire crackling in the narrow fireplace, for some Greenwich Village homes cannot boast of heat, and the March day was cold. There was also to be sunshine slanting in through the long casement windows upon her few antique pieces of mahogany, and outside in the wee back yard, Jonathan and David were to nod their delicately feathered heads over an iron railed balcony in approval of all this unusual festivity.

It was all as she had planned it, she thought approvingly, and she was just flicking an imaginary speck of dust off the polished tip table, where her blue bowl of jonquils smiled a radiant welcome when there was a knock on the door.

"Come."

The door was pushed open in a half diffident way and a tall, stooping gray-haired man walked in.

"Oh, it's you!" There was a flat note in her voice.

"Yes." He looked helplessly about for a place to put his hat and coat. "Wasn't I invited?"

"Of course." She took his things in her brisk way.

"You sounded," he remarked mildly, "disappointed."

"I was. I hoped Donald would be first."

"So that's the name of my rival."

Jane laughed gaily. "Yes, Henry, and you may as well give up the struggle now."

She smiled fondly at him, laying her hand on his arm for a brief moment as she went to the closet with his coat and hat. Love hadn't really passed her by,

for there had always been Henry Gray. Dear old Henry who had worked so faithfully in the same office with her all these years. But he was too modest in his methods, too shy and hesitant and humble. If, she thought, as she turned toward him again, if he had ever been a vigorous lover, he might have won her long before this. But that was something he didn't know and would never find out.

As he took the big chair by the window it occurred to Jane that he was as gray as his name. For his hair was gray and always a little mussed, a long lock straying with hopeless purpose over a large bald area. His suit was gray,—in sad need of pressing—and his eyes matched his suit. Even his mind appeared dull and gray to most people, but Jane had come to know it was shot through with bright warm colors. Looking at him now, her mouth settled a little firmly. "I'm as old as he, and he's a sight," she thought, but she said:

"Henry! You've come to my party, and look at your hair!"

He made a futile pass at it with his hands.

"I know, but I can't do anything with it."

"And your suit ——"

"What's the matter with my suit? It's my best one."

"And your necktie! Henry, come here."

Henry came and remained in quiet submission as she brushed him and whisked him, sewed on a hanging button and retied his tie.

"There." Her bright eyes swept him critically from

head to foot. "You'll do. No—your shoes. Here's a brush. Quickly, before people come."

Polishing, Henry paused to say gently:

"You know, Jane, if you'd just live near enough to take care of me, every day, I'd be a different person."

"I live near enough now."

"And me the ruin I was when I came in!"

She gave one of her little chuckles.

"But think of the fun I have restoring you. To have you always perfect. That wouldn't be—us."

Henry sighed and laid down his brush and went back to his chair. Jane put away her whisk broom and sewing basket, and wandered aimlessly about the room. Henry, lighting his pipe, remarked:

"Nervous, aren't you?"

"I? Not a bit. Sometimes, Henry, you're more absurd than usual."

Jane took a chair opposite him and began rocking. He looked at her calmly.

"Jane, you're giving a party, and I wish you could see your hair."

"What's the matter with my hair?"

"Jane, come here."

He had turned the tables, and she could do no less than obey, so she hitched her chair forward, bending her head to Henry's lifted hand.

"Your hair, my dear, is as soft and brown as the wing of a thrush." And then his clumsy tongue faltered, and his eyes finished what more he would say.

Jane pushed back her chair briskly, meeting his wistful glance with a cheerful smile.

"Sometimes I begin to think that, like wine, Henry, you improve with age."

"You'd better get me in your cellar quickly then. Good old wine isn't left long in the market these days."

"I believe in prohibition," she laughed, rising as the bell rang again.

They came all together—Mr. and Mrs. Everett, Mrs. Miller, old Miss Thorne, and young Mrs. Norton, and Donald himself. All were there but Suzanne who, because she lived so close in the next apartment, would, of course, be the last to appear.

It was a difficult affair to manage, consolidating this group of strangers into a friendly whole, moving Donald about from one person to another, and leading the conversation into channels which would best reveal the trend of their desires. But Jane, rather enjoying the game, succeeded before the afternoon was over in giving Donald a deep, swift glimpse into the hearts of each of them.

He found himself, at first, between the two men, Henry Gray and Everett, who were slightly acquainted.

"Haven't seen you for years," Henry said in his gentle way. "How are things going? Are you still in the office, or have you been able to get back to your writing?"

Everett gave a little snort.

"No, life doesn't run as smoothly as that."

He sat silent for a moment, then spoke with a wry sort of humor.

"You know, it's my theory that every artist should

be supported, if necessary, until he has had an opportunity to succeed or fail. I don't mean by relatives. I mean that some one of these rich men in our country ought to establish a fund for that purpose. I'd be the first to subscribe. Sickness," he explained to Donald, with a nod toward his wife at the further end of the room, "used up my capital and smashed my plans. I'm a salesman now, thanking the powers that be that I'm able to support her and the kid."

"Can't you write at night?" Donald asked, with interest.

"I tried it, but the creative mind can't divide itself between two activities. Either what I write is no good, or I'm no good for my job the next day. And I feel I owe all that's in me to the men who are paying my salary." He drew a deep breath and after a moment he concluded:

"Nope, the family went through enough hard times. I may make only a second-rate business man but at least I'll be a good provider."

"Well, maybe some day something will happen," Henry Gray essayed kindly, but Jane, hearing him, swept upon the group.

"I heard you, Henry Gray. For goodness' sake don't persuade anyone else to go through life as foolishly as you have. Henry," she explained, "has gone trailing through the years believing 'something would happen' so he could go to Europe. You ought to know by this time, Henry, the things you mean never *do* happen."

"Yes, I suppose so," he admitted reluctantly. "But

you can't always tell. It does seem now, though, as if I'd never get there. Still, I keep on hoping just the same." He laughed a little apologetically.

"Stop hoping. Begin doing," Jane said briskly. "Save your money. You've no one left to take care of now. In about five years you'll have enough put aside to buy your tickets. You could borrow the rest."

"Oh, no," Henry said hastily. "I couldn't borrow."

"How about a Fund for Eager Travellers?" Donald suggested, laughingly, "from the same rich gentleman who establishes a Fund for Ambitious Artists?"

"Exactly the idea," Jane cried, and drew Donald away to the side of Mrs. Norton. A lovely young thing she was, frail and shy and sweet. Donald found her hard to talk to until the sound of a piano in the next apartment came through the wall to them. They both sat listening, her eyes brightening as the melody sounded through the partition. At the end of it Donald asked her if she liked music.

"Oh, my, *yes!*" she sighed softly.

"You sing, do you?"

She shook her head.

"I don't know how. I've never had a chance to learn. That, or anything else. I've—you see, I've never played or had much fun, like other girls. I can't do the things they do. I can't dance or sing or play the piano. And music——" She drew a little rapt breath.

"If you could, you'd do nothing else but that?" Donald suggested, with a twinkle.

She nodded, in surprise.

"And I don't mean maybe!" she added swiftly, and they laughed.

"Oh, here's Suzanne!" Jane cried.

She came in like a breeze, and with her pale green dress and golden hair all the fragrance and beauty of Spring blossoms seemed to come with her. The room full of people, most of whom were worn and bruised by contact with the world, paused with instinctive appreciation of her fresh brightness.

"Lady Jane!"

She put two white hands out and flashed a smile about for the others. It was Suzanne's greeting, and apology for her late arrival.

"You've been dancing," Jane accused her sternly. "We all heard your music through the wall."

Suzanne laughed.

"Of course! Sunday's my only chance, since the august Board of Directors won't allow it at the office!"

"So it's still your first and only love."

"And will be till I die."

Then she tossed her bobbed hair out of her eyes and set her small mouth determinedly. "Some day I will dance, too, even if I'm fifty when I begin."

"Perhaps," drawled Jane.

"Horrid thing! Why do you say that?" Suzanne pouted.

"I know you, my dear. Now come help me serve tea."

Suzanne was a dilettante, one of the butterflies of the world, and very much loved for it by busy persons

like Jane. She flashed colorfully into people's lives, gave them a moment of her bright warm beauty, and winged on her way in the sunlight again. Suzanne would never save money for her dancing course, much as she really wanted it, because she could not endure—as butterflies cannot—cold and shadowy days. If fortune led her surely and happily to the desire of her heart she would dance through the days gaily, but to work for it! To deny herself present certain pleasures for future uncertain ones—oh! that was not Suzanne.

It was not until the fluffy biscuits were gone and the silver plates and china swept clean of all the good things, that Donald met Mrs. Miller. She was standing near the doorway, talking to Jane who silently signalled Donald to join them.

"I don't know what to do," he heard Mrs. Miller say. "I don't know what to do or where to turn. The school he ought to have costs so!"

Quite simply she included Donald in the conversation, explaining her difficulty to him as if it were too great to be borne alone.

Her little boy was seven years old and it had not been realized until he was four that there was some physical reason for his retarded mental growth. She was a widow and had spent hundreds of dollars on specialists before she found one who could help the child. After that, more hundreds were required for regular treatments and her resources were used up now, just when he was able to enter a very special school for children.

"I just don't know what to do or where to turn," she repeated, smiling bravely. "But—I suppose a way will come."

Before Donald could answer Miss Thorne had joined them. She was the one person with whom he had not had an opportunity to talk, and he got none now, for she made her adieux with an old-fashioned, elaborate courtesy, and went out, taking Mrs. Miller with her.

The rest soon followed, all but Suzanne, who lingered to help Jane wash the dishes, and finally flitted reluctantly from the room with a backward smile for Donald.

He took the big armchair, and Jane chose a low rocker opposite him. With the vivacious Suzanne gone, and the street noises sounding dimly through the windows, the quiet of the high ceiled old room became subtly more intimate, while the soft light of the fire, touching beloved and beautiful things in its gentle way, seemed to fling a warm circle about these two, shutting the world away. Donald pulled out a pipe, crossed one leg over the other, put back his head and breathed with deep content. The smoke from his pipe curled over his head in slow circles. In the friendly silence, the logs fell apart with a soft crash and the upleaping flames began humming a little tune.

"Well, are you satisfied with your clients?"

"Yes," he nodded at her. "Clever—the way you managed it. I wondered how you would. I think I understand about them all except —— Tell me a little

more about that young Madonna-looking person, and the one who went away first."

So Jane explained that from a workaday world Mrs. Norton, who craved music, had been caught into matrimony and rushed into motherhood before she was out of her teens. She found herself settled into a routine of work no less binding and dull than that from which she had sought to escape. Cleaning, cooking and caring for people filled her hours, and there was less and less chance for the lovely things of living she had thought might come to her in her new life. Music—she was starved for it. Had Donald noticed how she looked when the piano sounded through the walls of Suzanne's room? Her dream, Jane said, was to save enough money so that she might take piano and singing lessons. She had a glorious voice which Jane had heard quite by chance, but she was too shy to use it without training.

As for Miss Thorne, she had been taught by an old-fashioned upbringing the domestic accomplishments of needlework, cooking and managing a household. She had just lost some money in some poor investments, and her income had been cut in half. She was ready and willing to establish a Tea Room if she could find anyone to finance her through the first year.

"And now," Jane concluded, "you know all about them. What next?" Her bright gaze searched him.

Donald laid down his pipe and leaned toward Jane with both elbows on his knees.

"I can't do a thing, Miss Harcourt, without more

help from you," he said simply. "You must realize that."

Jane smiled slowly and shrugged.

"I'm through, my dear. My part ended with the introductions. I can't go any further into such an affair."

"You think it's fantastic, quixotic—foolish!"

He tried to make his voice sound cool and indifferent but Jane heard the note of anxiety and disappointment.

"We'll say instead that I am very old."

"No, that you're wise. I'm not. That's why I need you." He leaned toward her. "You've already given me your sympathy and interest. Go a little farther and give me your help. Please, Miss Harcourt."

But Jane shook her head.

"Absolutely no. You mustn't look for any further help from me. I can appreciate the beauty of your idea but I'm much too practical to approve it."

"Why will women be stubborn! I can't go ahead with these people—give them what they want, what some of them need—without you. I don't even know them! Together, we could do it, because you have everything that I lack. You said you were going to open the door and shove me through. You won't slam it shut in my face, instead, will you?"

He had never looked more persuasive. And it *would* be rather nice to ride behind him on this hobby steed of his, for it would mean seeing a good many stars and mountain tops on the way. Moreover, he was right, he did need a practical, sophisticated adviser.

Donald was not slow to see her weakening.

"They'd all be suspicious of me alone. How could I possibly send Suzanne to dancing class, for instance? Even if you don't approve of my scheme as a business proposition, just think of Mrs. Norton and the good you will be doing there. Surely that would be worth while."

Jane settled in her chair as though her back were against the wall.

"I believe that people are better off wanting than having. It's the whip to ambition."

"Not always ——"

She waved him into silence.

"I have discovered, too, that the more people are given, the more they ask for. I'm afraid your scheme is too idealistic for a practical solution. And, finally, I have an extreme distaste for meddling in other people's lives. If they make their own mistakes, there is no one to be blamed but themselves, but if outsiders crowd mistakes on them ——"

Jane shrugged eloquently and concluded her pessimistic tirade by saying that she didn't see how pride was to be circumvented anyway.

"That's the only sensible thing you've said," Donald observed coolly. "And even that's not very sensible, for I know there would be no objection from Mr. Everett and you know there'd be none from Mrs. Miller. Suzanne and Mrs. Norton are so young we could almost make them believe in fairies, and Miss Thorne could be approached in a businesslike way. There remains only Mr. Gray ——"

It was Jane's sense of humor that won the day for Donald. At mention of Henry's name Jane saw in a flash the timid gray gentleman, who had never travelled much of anywhere, except in the subways of New York City, on an ocean voyage for foreign ports. The thought was delicious. Anticipatory pleasure in the letters of his that would come back to her, and his own personal recital on his return, teased her.

"I can manage Henry Gray," she said decisively.

After that her promise to help him in the fantastic business of making dreams come true was as good as signed and sealed. She was embarked on a wild and serious adventure—that of changing the destinies of lives not remotely connected with her own—but Donald was with her, and Donald was young and optimistic and lovable—and—well—Donald had an irresistible way with him.

CHAPTER V

CRUMBLING WALLS

DONALD walked home from Jane's. He swung up the drive alongside the gleaming river, which the sunset was painting in myriad colors, his eyes held fascinated by the shifting beauty before him, and his mind enthralled by his own inner vision. As the sun touched the darkening water and ugly buildings and dirty little boats, by a miracle changing their ordinary aspect into an unusual and exquisite picture, so would he brighten and glorify these sorry lives he had come to know to-day. His happiness to be at last started along the line of work he had thought of for so many years, lifted him far past consideration of its difficulties. He was oblivious of possible obstacles in his path and blissfully careless of any untoward outcome of his strange adventure, his serene confidence resting not so much in its altruism as in its essential and basic justice, as, in his imagination, he saw his scheme taking root in the world, spreading and blossoming and flinging the seeds of the idea to the uttermost ends of the earth.

But as he bounded up the stone steps of his grandfather's old house, a curious change came over him, and he paused at the door, instinctively reluctant to enter into the deep shadow of Mr. McIntyre's disapproval. Nor was it easy, once inside this large, silent hall, to recall his first fine confidence. After he had given his coat and hat into Dobson's outstretched

hands, Donald went to one of the big carved chairs near the fireplace and dropped into it.

He stared at the bare andirons before him, struggling with this cold chill of doubt that had crept into his heart. Where was his happy surety? Why had it gone? If he was right he should not lose it. No matter what his grandfather thought—no matter what anyone thought——

As he argued with himself he became conscious of something else slowly obtruding upon him. It was a feeling more than a thought, the sensation that he was being closed in upon; that his beliefs were captured and caged, walled in here like himself, and that it was useless to struggle for freedom. Something—a force stronger than he—an influence of united personalities—was surrounding him, forcing him to recognition of its existence. It became for the moment so real that the force seemed actually to take shape—to have eyes——

With a muttered exclamation he sprang to his feet and glowered down the wide room. Nothing. Nobody. No sound. Just the still portraits of his ancestors in their large dark frames. But to Donald's excited fancy they seemed, as Dobson had long ago fearfully intimated they did, to come alive, to turn their heads and fasten their eyes upon him, and on each face was written dark disapproval or deep reproach.

Donald's look swept up and down the hall. Absurd! He must be getting old. Soon he'd be doddering and mumbling like old Dobson himself. Slowly and de-

liberately he walked to the center of the old Chinese rug, as he had five years before, thrust his hands in his pockets, leaned on his heels, and threw a glance of defiance about him.

But strangely enough it was not so easy to shrug off the idea now. This time the eyes seemed still to be following him, and the illusion that they were alive seemed to take on greater significance now than it had that other time. For Donald had done more than say "he didn't belong." He had actually demonstrated it.

Quite suddenly he lifted an arm and shook a clenched fist toward all the portraits.

"I'll show the tribe of you!" he muttered.

And then the great heavy oak door on his right opened, and his grandfather appeared, looking at him in amazement. It was not, however, his habit to comment unnecessarily, so he merely nodded curtly.

"Dobson told me you were here. Come in."

Donald followed the bent old figure, who took his customary seat and signalled the boy to one opposite him.

"It's been three days now since I last saw you, and the more I think about your youth and ignorance, the more I feel you should receive some counsel in the matter of handling this money. If you have made any plans, I'd like to hear them."

Donald had never lived through a more excruciating moment. Had his own fine enthusiasm tided him over until now, he would have jumped into his story and at least have given the impression of honest belief in himself, however crazy his words sounded in his

grandfather's ears. But that moment of doubt in the hall had dispelled his assurance, so that he hesitated.

"Are they in shape yet?"

"Yes, I think so."

"What are they?"

Again Donald hesitated, the old feeling of helplessness in trying to explain matters to unsympathetic ears upon him.

"I'm going to carry out my idea as I gave it to you the other day," he said stubbornly.

"Let me see. You said something about 'brightening up the corner where you are,' I believe."

The sting of his tone brought unexpectedly a quick retort.

"Put it this way, Grandfather. Following your example, I've decided to invest some of this money in people."

There was a moment of silence, then Mr. McIntyre slowly shoved out his lower lip.

"People! Humph! About as insecure an investment as you could choose. I told you that."

"But you did it."

Mr. McIntyre's head followed his lip. He spoke softly. "Young man, I didn't do it until I'd spent a lifetime investing in gilt-edged securities. Nor until I'd found out what you don't know about people. What kind of people are you planning to invest in, I'd like to know. What kind of people?"

"One's a writer. At least, he wants to be, only he hasn't enough to live on for a year to get started, so I'm ——"

"Married?"

"Yes."

"Children?"

"One."

"What has he ever written?"

"I don't know."

"What does he want to write now?"

"I—don't know."

His grandfather shot him a piercing look.

"What makes you think he can write? Do you know that?"

"No, and it isn't important that I do. I'm dealing in aspiration, not in certain production, and I'm not afraid of the result. I've met him. That's enough."

Mr. McIntyre put his lean fingers together carefully at the tips and tapped them gently. His voice was soft though there was a bite in the words.

"So you are supporting a family of three for a year because the gentleman in the case doesn't, in all probability, relish his present job and fancies an easier way to earn money. Bah!" Abruptly he jerked himself forward. "Any man who wants to sit around the house, scribbling little words on a piece of paper all day, is either sick, idiotic, or lazy. If he is sick, he should go to the hospital. If idiotic, the place for him is the asylum. If he is lazy, he won't succeed at any job, and is not worth a thought. I'm disappointed, Donald, but not surprised." He leaned back in his chair again. "Cross him off your list. Anyone else?"

Donald drew a long breath. Why couldn't his grandfather ever see things as he did? Well, he'd

make him! He thought a moment, then the picture of Mrs. Norton rose to his mind, and her voice, soft and strained, rang in his ears. "I don't know what to do. I really don't know what to do." No possible going wrong here!

"There's a widow ——"

"She knows who you are?"

"She knows my name, but ——"

"That's enough for any widow."

Donald laughed. "You flatter me too much. She's not interested in me or anyone except a pathetic backward child of hers ——"

"Worse and worse! Are you going to support this widow too? Let me tell you, young man, if you support her for a year, you'll do it for the rest of your life. What's the matter with the boy?"

"He's in the hands of a specialist ——"

"What for?"

"I don't know."

"What specialist?"

"I don't know that either. But I do know that if he's to grow up like other children he'll have to continue to be under special supervision and have special schooling for some time to come. She can't afford to meet these expenses, so I'm helping her."

"You've seen the child?"

"No."

"You are sure it exists?"

Donald controlled himself. "Certainly. Do you think I have no sense at all?"

"I was beginning to wonder," drily. "Well, then,

granting that the child exists, you have no knowledge that it is really in need of the medical treatment and special schooling she claims for it, have you?"

"I have only met these people, Grandfather," Donald said crisply, "and I have not had time to check up their stories. But, of course, I will before I go farther into their affairs."

Watching the boy alertly, the grim old man softened a little. After all, Donald was very young. He must be led to knowledge. So he unbent to explanation.

"People, my boy, as you are beginning to see, are the least safe investment in the world. I never dreamed you would seriously consider this, or I would have forbidden it. People disappear. People change their minds. People lose faith and forget honor. They are never what they seem. Think it over and let me know in a day or so that you have altered your plans."

"I've already thought, sir, and I'm not going to alter my plans," Donald answered at once. His chin was set for fight, and instantly the cool opposition to his advice kindled Mr. McIntyre to anger. His questions snapped and Donald's answers crackled.

"Have you other people in mind besides this would-be writer, and the widow?"

"I have."

"Who else?"

"I am also going to help a young woman take lessons in stage dancing. I am going to establish a middle-aged lady of gentle breeding in a business of her own. I'm going to send a gray-haired man abroad.

And I'm going to give a hard-worked little mother an opportunity to take music lessons. And that's all I intend doing for the present."

For a space words failed the old gentleman and he simply sat glaring his disgust at his grandson. Finally, with an air of discovering the worst at all costs, he wagged a forefinger at Donald and made his last demands.

Donald was, he supposed, making all these ridiculous loans on a business basis? And when he learned that Donald had no notion of collecting interest on his money, that he was asking for no securities, and hadn't dreamed of having anything put in writing, he turned from disgust to a pitying sarcasm that was all the more forceful because soft-voiced.

"I used to think the McIntyre stock produced men, but I guess my idea about the rest of us must have been all wrong. We've had fifty-seven varieties of occupations through the history of the family, but it takes you to spring a new one and show us all up." He laughed shortly. "They say it takes two generations to build a fortune that the third will kick away. Well, you've always been a good strong kicker, so ——"

Donald got to his feet.

"Grandfather, I refuse to argue this matter further with you. It doesn't get us anywhere. You are like the man who takes a machine to pieces, looks at all the separate parts, and, in a fury because they don't work, throws them away. You've sat here and dissected my plan and because each part of it appears

useless to you, you scrap the whole business. Well, talking is a waste of time. You told me, I think, that I had a year."

"Yes, and it makes me sick to think what a fool can do in a year."

"We'll see at the end of it." Donald turned toward the door. "Suppose we drop the subject until that time. Good-bye, sir."

He left the room.

But alone again, Donald realized that his faith in himself, or rather his faith in an idea that had been a part of him for years, was sadly shaken, and the walls of his air castle were crumbling before his eyes. In the light of the recent tumultuous interview he saw how unbusinesslike his plan was, and as he recalled his grandfather's questions, there crept upon him all the doubts that can assail a quixotic nature.

Was it, after all, too wild and insecure a scheme? He admitted reluctantly that, after a lifetime of living, his grandfather must know something. Perhaps he would better give it all up. Even Jane, though she had been somewhat sympathetic and comprehending, had disapproved, and her consent to aid him had been given unwillingly. Was he really as alone in his attitude about life as he seemed to be? Or wasn't it because his grandfather—and Jane—were older, that they disagreed? Couldn't someone his age give him the moral support he needed now? Who could he turn to? He thought of Genevieve and determined to see her after dinner that night.

Genevieve Powers and her mother were the only

ones left of an old and respected New York family. Unfortunate investments and careless management a few years ago had forced them lately to economies and manœuvres obnoxious to both women. Yet they met these necessities with pride and indomitable spirits, abandoning the luxury of a home for the crowded space of two rooms with a manner that seemed to indicate it was their preference. And they contrived, somehow, not only to remain close to their friends in the fashionable part of the city between the forties and eighties near the Avenue, but to keep about them, also, the appearance of luxury to which they were accustomed.

Waiting on the broad, low davenport for Genevieve that night, Donald wondered, as he had wondered many times before, how these two women managed to give to their living-room a distinct yet unobtrusive charm. The room was done in dull grays and greens, with an occasional deft touch of deep purple or old blue or mahogany, in the coloring of a vase or the silk of a lamp-shade. It did not pretend to follow any period, though most of the furnishings were mellowed with age, but it held an atmosphere which was restful and satisfying to the senses.

Into this background Genevieve fitted most perfectly a moment later. She had chosen to wear a soft green dress, low cut and sleeveless, her only ornament a diamond studded platinum bar pin. Usually there was a single vivid touch of color about her somewhere, but to-night it was missing. And as she dropped gracefully onto the davenport, inviting Donald to a seat be-

side her, it seemed to him that she was softer, more approachable, than he had ever seen her.

"I've broken one engagement and refused two others for you to-night, Donald. What have you to say to that?"

"That I'm not worth it, and you may regret your generosity."

Genevieve's low rich laugh trembled on the air.

"Such humility! Over the 'phone you sounded so imperious I didn't dare refuse you. Have you something on your mind?"

"Yes. May I bore you?"

"You never bore me, Donald. Put out the lights—all but that one in the corner—then we can be cosy. Mother's gone to the Opera to-night so you can take your time and tell it all."

When Donald came back to her side, Genevieve lazily reached for the cigarettes and handed them to him in a little silence which, for her, had its uses. She was not afraid of silences, for in them she made slow graceful motions, knowing the value of each gesture. Now she could feel his response to her warm fragrance, but just as he bent his head to kiss her white arm, she laughed and dropped back against the cushions, out of reach.

"You love to tease, don't you?" he asked, his pulses beating a little faster.

"But what have you done to deserve such a favor?"

Her sidewise glance caught the passing gleam of excitement in his eyes that were usually so cool and steady. It was satisfying. For, many years ago, she

had decided Donald was the most eligible man in her set, and after the crash of her fortunes, her logic persuaded her further to the match. Besides being the youngest and handsomest and richest, Donald had only one near relative—his grandfather. After his death there would be no one to dispute hers and her mother's use of the McIntyre fortune.

But there was a deeper attraction than that which drew the girl, for she was possessed of honesty and courage herself, and demanded them of the man she would marry. She found them in Donald, and though at times those very traits made him different from other men, more immature, perhaps, and careless about matters that she thought important, he seemed also to have greater strength of character against which her most carefully concealed allurements had been flung in vain. It was that unseen resistance in him which was at once a stimulant and an annoyance, and it had been only lately she had felt him weakening to her charms.

She turned to face Donald, sliding her arm along the back of the couch.

"Now," she smiled. "You have all my attention."

"And I find it most distracting. I meant to talk business. Now I want to talk about you."

"Business? Oh, that interests me much more. Are you seriously thinking of getting to work?"

So once again Donald recited his beliefs and his hopes, lured on by her sudden stillness to more expansive explanation than he had intended. It seemed to him, in the enveloping dimness of the room, that

Genevieve had never listened so well, had never been so in tune with him, so receptive, and though he could not see her face clearly, he responded to her unspoken sympathy and quite let himself go, believing the soft silence held sure approval.

But for the girl, sitting so tensely beside him, the silence did not hold gentle understanding. To her, it seemed as though Donald's words crashed and reverberated in a horrible space, bounding against her finally, and hurting her cruelly. So she held herself quiet to hide a breaking up of herself deep inside. He mustn't know how she felt.

Although she had known Donald for years, and had been aware of the different quality of his spirit, he had never before revealed himself so frankly. And what she came to learn of him to-night was bitterly disappointing. So this was the man she had thought she loved! This man-child with dreams like toy balloons! Impatience and annoyance filled her and she clenched the hand that was behind Donald.

But as he finished and turned confidently to her, she drew a little shivering breath. In spite of his words, in spite of her new-found knowledge of him, she felt he was stronger than she, finer than any man she knew. There was purpose in his face, in every gesture and expression, and as the echo of his passionate speech came back to her, she imagined for a moment how it would be if he were making love to her with that same hot enthusiasm. The thought clutched at her, filling her with pleasure and driving out her contempt.

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Yes, Donald was desirable, and she wanted him. She wanted him and his money, for she and her mother couldn't play the game much longer. She thought swiftly for a moment, her eyes downcast, then suddenly the hand that had been stretched along the back of the davenport fell on Donald's and she drew his to her lap.

"You dear person." Her low voice throbbed, and she leaned near that he might see the warm glowing approval of her eyes. "The Business of Making Dreams Come True. How like you! It sounds—sweet."

Donald's fingers tightened over hers. It was for this he had come, yet he had hardly expected such encouragement.

"I'm glad you think so. But is it practical? Do you think I can really work it out with Miss Harcourt, as I've outlined it? I was so sure—till I talked with Grandfather. Then he put me up in the air. Is it just because he's old? What do *you* think? Tell me the truth, Gen."

"I think you can do anything you want to do, Don dear. I have tremendous faith in you."

Donald drew a deep breath of relief, then impulsively lifted her hand to his lips, and pressed a kiss on it.

"Now I *will*, you see," he said, a little excitedly. "Because I am bursting with gratitude."

"Merely for my approval? That isn't like you, Don."

She gently disengaged her hand, and drew away

from him, her soft eyes seeming to call him and hold him off at the same time. Quite suddenly the beauty of her, coupled with that strange new sweetness he had discovered in her to-night, went to his head. He bent close to her.

"Your approval means a lot to me, Gen. I came here feeling blue and lonely, hoping I could make you see and feel this thing as I do, yet not believing I could. And now that I have ——"

She waited quietly, but her dark eyes impelled more.

"It seems to bring us a lot closer together. It adds so much to what has always been a jolly friendship. I've—you know I've always liked you, Gen, but I've never felt anything—well—sympathetic in you. To-night I do. It's—it's simply great."

He stopped, but his eyes told her more than he quite dared say yet. And Genevieve? She was in a riot of emotion, but she kept her head clear. A false step now and everything would be lost. She hated his philanthropic turn of mind, because it would make him a laughing stock with everyone. She must, while seeming to fall in with his plan, somehow so shape her words that his own doubts would return. If she could manage that he might give it all up and never know she had been the cause.

So she clasped her hands loosely in her lap and fixed a far-away gaze on the lamp in the corner. And as she talked, seeming to be miles away from him in a dream of her own, he found himself thinking that she had never before been so warm and close and alluring.

"Do you know, Don, I've often had some of the

same ideas myself. We lead such selfish existences, all of us. A round of gaities and no thought for anyone but ourselves. Sometimes I want to chuck the whole business. It's frightful work for a girl handicapped as I am, you know." She paused to smile at him bravely. It was the only reference she had ever made to her straightened circumstances, and it was done so swiftly and casually that it stirred him to pity. He nodded in understanding.

"I've often thought," she went on musingly, "about getting out of the crowd and really *doing* something. Something useful and worth while, you know."

"Why don't you, Gen?"

She spread her hands.

"What could I do? I'm afraid I'm not brave enough, Don. I could follow along behind someone else, but to go it alone——" She shook her head. "I haven't the courage you have. I haven't enough faith in myself—or the people I'd like to help. I'd be afraid to venture on anything as—as—unusual as your scheme. It is a little wild, you know. Besides I'd care what people said. And I'd mind being dropped."

"Who'd drop you?"

"Oh, all the crowd. There's no room for busy bees in this hive of drones. I wouldn't miss any of them—much—but I'd miss you, Don. I'd hate to lose sight of you, you know."

"But you wouldn't. Why, I'd think a lot more of you than I do now."

"Would you?" wistfully. "That's an inducement to try!" She laughed lightly, then a sudden thought

seemed to strike her and a little frown came between her eyes.

"Don," she said, "there's just one thing that troubles me about this scheme of yours."

"What?"

"Your grandfather's disapproval. He's so very much against it. Supposing you get started, and at the end of a year he was still opposed. What then?"

"I'd go on without his approval," he said grimly.

"But wouldn't that anger him? Mightn't he withdraw his financial support?"

"He's likely to do anything when he's aroused. He might even disown me!"

Her look held soft pity and dismay.

"Oh, but Don!" she cried. "That would be cruel! Why, you're the only relative he has left. And he's an old man. If you forced him to that, you'd kill him."

"I'm not forcing him to it. I'm not forcing him to anything. But neither can he force me to anything."

"Is he trying to?" quickly.

"Oh, well — He wants me to get into some regular business, and —"

"And —?"

Donald turned to her frankly.

"He wants me to marry and settle down, Gen. He wants to be sure the family name will go on."

She met him quite impersonally.

"Well, Don, if you pleased him in that, wouldn't he be more likely to help you in your plan?"

"Possibly. But it's a question. He's awfully set. And anyway, Gen, I don't do things that way."

"What do you mean?"

"I mean in the first place that I want to prove myself before I ask any woman to marry me. And I mean in the second, that I'll never marry just to please Grandfather. When I marry it'll be because I love—and for no other reason."

Genevieve rose and moved to the fireplace beside which stood a lamp. She idly switched on the light, and then lifted a slender white arm to the mantel-shelf, resting her head against it, and gazing thoughtfully down at her slim slippered foot.

Drooping thus in the warm glow of the light she made a lovely figure, the appeal of which lifted Donald to his feet. He crossed the room to her side and as he approached she lifted her head, and then shrank before the look in his face.

In the next moment his arms were about her and her soft warm body was close against his

"Gen," he whispered hoarsely.

For a brief instant she flashed him a look that revealed the passion storming within her, then quickly veiled it and held her face away.

"No! no! Don! Play fair."

"I am."

"You're not," she panted. "Let me go—I'll tell you why."

Released, she stood before him, breathing quickly. Had she been foolish? Or had she been wise? Would he have followed up his kiss with a proposal? Or would he have taken it and gone his way? She didn't know, and she had been afraid to risk it. Better to

keep him wanting longer,—give him nothing until he had been goaded to greater desire.

“You’re not sure of yourself—and I’m not sure of myself. I care about you—a lot, Don,—but after all, you’re right. You haven’t proved yourself. I’d have to see you succeed—at something—it doesn’t matter what ——”

“And if I do?”

“Ah!” it was a little breath, that might have been a laugh, a wish or a promise.

He went away in a tumult of emotion, set on fire by her loveliness, a little ashamed of his own weakness before it, puzzled by her manner that seemed to give and at the same time to withdraw, to approve and yet hold out a faint disapproval.

Going over the evening in his memory he found himself recalling less and less her first warm sympathy and the excitement to which she had stirred him, and remembering only her later words—“so *unusual* a scheme—It is a little wild, you know—I’d have to see you succeed at something—it doesn’t matter ——” What was back of it?

Had her early enthusiasm only been a shield? Had she wanted not to hurt him? Had she preferred to let him down easily? Didn’t she believe what she said—that he could do it? Was she a skeptic with Jane and his grandfather, but too fond of him to tell him so?

The more he thought about it, the more convinced he became that that was so, and he reached home in a misery too deep for words, his disappointment and

loneliness fully returned and an ache within him preventing sleep. All night he tossed on his bed, his thoughts racing in hot confusion through his mind. Uncertainty and doubt had displaced his first childish delight, and the dark hours were a torture to him.

Could he alone be right, and all these others wrong? Was he a blind, optimistic young fool? Were people so dishonest as not to be believed? Were they so unworthy as not to be helped? Mr. Everett—would he justify his and other people's belief in him? Henry Gray—did he deserve a trip abroad? Miss Thorne—was she capable of running a business, even after she was started in it? Could Suzanne dance, and Mrs. Norton sing? He didn't know. He could answer none of these questions, and his torment grew.

Even Jane, though she had agreed to help him, did it unwillingly. What was the matter with people? Or was the matter with him?

Dawn found him still awake, and as the gray light chased darkness from the corners of the room, Donald sprang from his bed. He'd take a shower and dress and go for a walk, and settle this matter once and for all. Either he'd push on, unshaken in his determination and beliefs, and carry the adventure through to the end—whatever it might be—or he would give up the whole idea, now and forever, return the money, and settle down to the sort of life he was expected to live. In which case he'd probably marry Genevieve.

Well, he thought, remembering the moment he had held her in his arms, that wouldn't be bad consolation —

And then he hated himself. For in the clear light of morning he knew he did not love Genevieve. She stirred him to passion, blinded his senses when he was with her, but away from her he had always a little mistrust of her, a little question as to what her real self was.

Action brought some measure of relief to his strained mind. A cold shower and a brisk rub-down loosened the tension of his nerves, and by the time he was out of doors swinging up the deserted Drive, he felt well able to grasp and settle the problem.

He crossed the ferry at 125th Street, stopping for coffee at a lunch wagon before he started walking. How far he walked, or where he was when he paused, he hadn't the faintest idea. He had tried at first to keep his mind on the problem he was to settle, but the sheer beauty of the morning, blue and gold and shining wet with dew, had driven all troublesome thoughts away. He walked for miles, thinking of nothing but the joy of possessing a strong warm body and of being alive in a world like this on a spring day.

And then he paused because the road under his feet had changed to a narrow, rutty little trail. He had, in his absorption, gotten off the main thoroughfare, but he could see a house through the trees, so he pushed ahead to inquire his whereabouts.

Alert now, he went on through a small patch of woods, and came out of a little clearing into a sunny open space. Before him stood a tiny house which seemed to stand alone on a stretch of uninhabited land.

Donald's glance moved from the house to the little fence surrounding it and he stopped short in his stride to stare at it. For it was made of pieces of chairs,—high backs and low backs, curved backs and straight backs, mahogany backs and mission backs, with here and there an upholstered or kitchen back,—there they stood, driven firmly into the ground to the same height and tightly wired together, all of them garnered, no doubt, from the marshy fields in the distance, where piles of cast-off rubbish and heaps of ashes were dimly discernible.

Donald moved softly forward. What curious idea was this? Who could live behind this strange fence? Wondering, he studied it longer and then looked once again at the house and surroundings, finding himself more and more puzzled by the contradiction of the place.

For the house, tiny as it was, was neat in a spotless coat of white paint, and the yard before it was a glory of spring flowers flinging a lovely fragrance into the spring air. Purple and white violets, gay little tulips and yellow daffodils made bright patches over the wee strip of green lawn, while from a budding magnolia tree a mother robin began busily scolding the inquisitive stranger.

It was beautiful, Donald thought. The little shingled cottage, with its wistaria vine spreading a faint lavender mist over the roof, might be hiding away a treasure, and the queer little fence, so forbidding in its ugliness, might be the monster dragon protecting it from an unkind world.

And as he stood, amazed and wondering, there rose from her knees on the inside of the fence the figure of a girl who held a paint brush in one hand and a pail of white paint in the other. She stared at him, and he stared back at her—into the face of the Girl in the Shabby Suit.

CHAPTER VI

MARCIA OF THE MARSHES

THERE she was, the same girl, looking at him, amazed, out of wide eyes under their curling dark fringes. She was not dressed in the shabby suit this time but wore instead a dull blue cotton dress, relieved of its plainness by tiny white frills at the collar and cuffs.

Donald went forward eagerly, recognition and glad surprise lighting his face, and, stopping at the queer little fence, he pulled off his cap and smiled.

"You see," he said, "it didn't do a bit of good to run away from me."

She put her pail and brush down on the ground and straightened to face him. A faint little answering smile crept to her lips as she answered.

"No, I suppose you can't run away—from some things."

"I wanted to find you," he spoke with direct simplicity. "I've thought about you ever since the day of the wedding. I was going to find you if it took me the rest of my life."

"Why?"

"Because," Donald put both elbows on the back of an unpainted kitchen chair and bent over it. "Because I had things to say to you. And I knew you had things to tell me."

Could it be possible he was unaware of the queer little fence under his arms? Hadn't he seen it? If he had, he wouldn't be talking like that. And remembering those other girls she had seen, bridesmaids in pale greens and the golden girl with her wonderful black hair and eyes who had walked beside Donald, she spoke in a hard little voice.

"I can't believe you. What have you to say to me? Or I to say to you? We live many miles apart, and we're strangers."

But Donald shook his head.

"No. We're not strangers. We've never been. From the first moment I looked at you I had a queer sort of feeling that we knew each other."

What was there about him that was so persuasive? His disarming candor? His frank eagerness? His happy smile flashing over his serious face? She knew this was the merest badinage for him, yet she found herself half believing him, wanting him to go on — Collecting her wits she laughed merrily.

"It's a bit early in the morning for such gallantry."

"And I'm not half started!" Donald warned her gaily, as putting both hands on a chair back he made ready to spring to her side. "May I come over?"

"No!"

The surprise of it stopped him.

"Why not?"

"Because," she told him a little breathlessly, her outflung hand dropping to her side, "it—it wouldn't do any good."

"What do you mean?"

And then it was she who took hold of the queer little fence between them and shook it in a little gust of anger and impatience.

"I mean that even if you came over, the fence would be there just the same. Really between us. It's always so. It's always been so. I've tried to pretend—but it's always there in the end and no one really ever gets over."

For answer he vaulted lightly over the fence.

"There!"

He was standing very close to her, ardent, smiling a little. She tried to meet his eyes but could not, and quite suddenly she lost her breath and stepped back.

"After all, fences are only made to climb over," he argued persuasively. "And to paint," he added as an inspiration. "Let's see. You've just begun. This one is finished. Shall I cover up the scratched mahogany one next?"

"If you like."

He stooped for the pail and brush and she leaned against the fence, watching him silently, not at all sure how to treat him. He was so unexpected! But if she held reservations in her mind concerning his methods of approach, they were all she did have, for he was a most attractive figure in his loose gray knicker suit, with the sun gleaming on his bare head and his face earnestly bent over his task.

It seemed unbelievable to the girl that he was here,—this man who had completely filled her thoughts since the day of the wedding. She had gone over and over the incidents of that hour in the church, picturing

herself doing differently, saying other things, until the affair had taken on the faint colors of romance. After that it had been easy to let herself fancy meeting him again, and, from a magic sort of beginning, going on to strange sweet ends —

"This is the cleverest idea for a fence I've ever seen," Donald observed. "Strong, durable, economical."

It was an unfortunate remark, bringing her abruptly from far-away lands, back to the world of reality about her.

"Oh, don't." She struck her hands together sharply, and he looked up in surprise. "It's ugly and queer and I hate it!" she cried with intensity.

"Why do you bother painting it then?"

The girl dropped on the grass beside him, one tanned little hand pulling at the tender blades of grass, her color coming and going, and her blue eyes deepening to black, as they did when things hurt her.

"I thought, if it was covered up, people might not see—so soon—just what it was."

Donald laid down his brush and swung about to face her, crossing his feet and clasping his knees with his hands.

"Does it make any difference—their seeing what it is?"

"Make any difference!" she cried, staring at him. "Didn't it to you?" curiously.

He shook his head and for a puzzled moment she was bewildered, then she laughed.

"Oh, of course. Because you came alone. But if

you had brought any friends—that girl who wore the gold dress—then it would make a difference. You couldn't bring her. Could you?"

"Because of the girl. Not because of the fence," he said quietly.

She took that in silence, then, casting another glance at the fence, she went on, stifling the pain in her voice.

"It's always been there. Shutting me in and other people out. Fences — Keeping people from people. I tell you I *hate* them. I wish —"

"What do you wish?" He leaned toward her eagerly. This was what he wanted to know. This was why he had wanted to find her. This would explain the look of her face,—and perhaps he could help here too.

"Oh, I wish I could smash all the fences in the world!" she exclaimed passionately. "If I were just able to go into one person's life and then another's, without having to knock at the gate first! I'm *lonely*," she ended fiercely. "And it's the fence which has made me so—and kept me so."

"I don't believe I quite understand."

"I'll try and explain." Her voice lost its tone of excitement and became thoughtful. "You see, when I was a baby I used to toddle away from the house. I would wander off and be gone for hours, picking wild flowers out of sight in the marshes out there. Dads was afraid for me. The ground was swampy, and sometimes there were dogs, and once, when it took him nearly a day to find me, he made up his mind to fence in the yard.

"Of course we were poor. He couldn't buy lumber, so he had to use his ingenuity." She smiled tenderly. "Dear old Dads! He was doing the best he could—and this was the result. He tried to make up for the ugliness of the fence by transplanting flowers to the yard. I love our yard, and the house ——"

"It's just the fence," Donald agreed. "Because it's ugly?"

"Only partly. Really because it's—it's queer. I went to school, you see, after Dads realized I was lonely out here, and I made friends and—and—then I brought them home. That's where the trouble came. They were nice children, from nice homes in other parts of town, and when they saw where I lived—and this fence—they told their mothers who wouldn't let them come any more." She dropped her eyes and caught a trembling lip between her teeth. "And I wasn't invited to their places—after a while."

"That *was* hard," Donald said gently.

"They called me—'Marcia of the Marshes.' But I didn't mind that!" She flung up her head, the blaze of her emotion drying the tears in her eyes. "I wouldn't have minded what they called me, if they'd only kept coming to see me! If only I had ever had friendships as other girls have!"

"But after you grew up, why couldn't the fence come down?"

"Oh!" Marcia's little laugh was a half sob of tenderness. "Dads didn't know all this. And how could I tell him? He rather loves the fence, I think, just because it does keep me here—with him—and the

rest of the world away. If he knew—but I couldn't hurt him like that. I'm enough for him. He thinks he is enough for me. You see?"

"Yes."

"I ought not to care so much, of course," Marcia went on. "It's only snobbishness, really, that makes people cut me out of their acquaintance because I live behind a fence of old chairs. Snobbishness or indifference or selfishness."

"Yes. And those things you'd have met sooner or later, no matter where you lived."

"I suppose so."

"They are anywhere, just as real blocks to friendships as stone walls—as your own little fence."

"You have found it so even in your world?"

He bent toward her.

"Time after time. I've been lonely too, Marcia—may I call you that? For we're going to be friends, you see."

Donald—and the golden morning—had bewitched her. She found her mind wandering questingly over untried trails, her doubts drifting from her as her longing grew. To have a companion spirit like his, after all the long, lonely years! To laugh and be gay with this man! "Magic beginnings leading on to strange sweet ends——" Her eyes grew dreamy and her voice low and sweet with her musings.

"Other people have come over, as you have," she said, "and then have gone away again—and not come back. It's always happened, sooner or later, and it's always been because of the fence. But you said it

didn't make any difference to you. Did you mean it?" wistfully. "Would you come back?"

"Listen to me," Donald said. "I don't like fences either. And there aren't any around my life. You may come as far into mine as you want to. And I'd like to come into yours,—again and again and again. May I?"

She nodded, and he took her hand as though they were sealing a compact.

"It was these things we had to say to each other, you see," he explained gently.

And then he turned to his painting again, while she tried to capture and hold the poise that his dear friendliness had so shaken. She put her head back against the fence, her eyes on the blue sky overhead. Above, in the trees somewhere, a meadow-lark flung down its sweet song, and the echo of its joy stirred in the heart of the friendless girl. Magic beginnings —

"I don't even know your name," she said at last in shy surprise.

So he told her and saw with dismay that a startled flash of recognition leaped to her eyes.

"Oh!" It was just a breath.

"What's the matter?"

But she shook her head, dumb with a misery as sudden and deep as her moment of happiness.

For she had heard of him, knew something of his history, even in this remote spot. He was Donald McIntyre, the sole remaining heir to the vast fortune accumulated by his grandfather. A person as remote from her life as the stars. The bright castles built by

her swift imagination a moment before, fell crashing to the ground. Why, the girls with whom he walked at the wedding were only six out of dozens like that! How could he possibly want to spend any time with her? How could she have believed she could go into his life when he was who he was, and she was who she was?

"What's the matter?" he repeated.

She laughed lightly, rising from the ground and brushing the grass from her blue cotton gown while she tried to keep her voice careless.

"Oh, knowing who you are makes everything very different!"

He rose too and looked at her for a moment without speaking.

"Who's building fences now?" he asked quietly.

"I'm not!" She flung back her head. "They've been built for ages. Your grandfather built yours. A beautiful, shiny fence of gold pieces."

"After all, though, it's his fence, not mine."

"Yours some day," she reminded him curtly.

"It won't make any difference. But if you think it will, let's play the game anyway, until it is mine."

"But what's the use? That's what hurts!" she cried in a sort of despair. "Beginning—and then having to stop! That's what always happens."

"You make me wish I hadn't a cent in the world."

"Oh, no!"

"Yes. It's in the way—like your fence—cutting me off from something real, that I want very much."

But she scarcely heard him.

"Oh, that's almost wicked," she said in soft reproach. "Why, you have a wonderful opportunity for doing good with all you have. If I had it ——!"

"What would you do with it?"

She drew a long breath and flung her arms wide to the world.

"Do you know what I'd do?" she cried in a ringing voice. "I'd find other people, fenced in as I am, and then I'd help them get over their fences!"

Had he heard her aright? Why, that was like his own idea. A wish to serve—only in a little different way! It was too good to be true. But he'd have to make sure.

A sudden inspiration came to him. Like a flash he saw his grandfather's study, and the old man sitting in his chair by the window, a grim, harsh skeptic. He folded his arms across his chest and fixed a cold glance on Marcia.

"That's a ridiculous idea," he said sternly.

"It's the only thing money should be used for!" she answered hotly.

"You are a dreamer with your head in the clouds."

"It's the dreamers who make the world beautiful for other people."

" 'Brighten up the corner ——' " he started to sing, but she whirled on him.

"Oh, I think you're horrid! I thought you'd understand."

"Believe me, I do. I understand too well," nodding wisely.

"You don't! Or you wouldn't talk that way."

Donald's tone became patient, paternal.

"Listen to me, child. I understand all there is to understand about money, and I can tell you what you don't know. I know that people are either smart enough to make it or smart enough to keep it after someone else has made it for them. If, for instance," he argued kindly, "I gave you money to use in that idealistic way you want to, you'd soon be as badly off as you are now."

"Humph! I wouldn't take your old money as a gift!" Then growing curious in her turn, she asked, "But if I had some, what would you have me do with it?"

"Invest it."

"So I would!" she cried out triumphantly. "In other people! A grand gamble for a little more joy in life!"

Exulting secretly, Donald grew more solemn, and pointed a warning finger.

"My dear girl, people are the most unsafe investment you could choose."

"Oh, I know that, but I'd pick safe ones!"

"None of them is safe," Donald stated darkly, shaking his head, "none. You don't know all you ought to know about people. They pay interest only in ingratitude and disillusionment."

"I wouldn't have your mind for anything in the world," scornfully.

"People," Donald went on sententiously, "change. People disappear. People lose faith and forget honor. If you ever acquire any money to invest, do, I beg of

you, come to me for advice first. It makes me sick to think how you might throw it away."

"And it makes me sick to think of spending it just on myself."

Donald waved her to silence.

"I can give you information on any sort of investments you want—oil wells, stocks, bonds, any gilt-edged securities that would pay you a good big rate of interest."

"But my people," Marcia said briskly, "would pay me six per cent."

Donald looked at her in swift surprise.

"Oh."

"And of course they'd put up securities."

"Oh."

"And I'd have everything put in writing."

"Oh. You would? Er—why?"

"It's the only way to do business. I'd make it a business, you see." She nodded brightly. "Because I shouldn't like to enjoy money that way, and suddenly find it used up and have to stop enjoying it." She shook her head. "No, I'd make it a real business. Unique, but—practical."

"Ah, but how would you go about making it practical? That's the question."

"It would be difficult," she admitted, thoughtfully, when Donald interrupted her.

"Your idea is impossible," he said, "making people put up security and pay interest,—why, that would cut out some people at the start. If—if you're going to help people over fences you can't just choose the

ones that will pay you for your trouble. Don't you see you can't?"

"Y-yes," Marcia reluctantly agreed. "My idea presents problems, doesn't it? And there's another thing too,—the danger there is in giving much to people who aren't used to having much. It sometimes goes to their heads."

"How do you mean?"

Her merry laugh rang out unexpectedly.

"Isn't this nonsense? But isn't it fun! I never dreamed I'd tell all this to anyone. Why, this is what I mean. If I really had a fortune dropped into my lap, I might not do a thing with it that I'm telling you now. I might—oh—I might just spend it all on clothes for myself!"

"You wouldn't!" he contradicted sharply. "I don't believe that about you at all. It's human nature to do, —when you can,—the thing you've dreamed of doing."

"Oh, you never can tell. 'People change,'" she reminded him mischievously.

"You are getting the better of me!" he laughed. "I simply can't argue with any woman before breakfast."

CHAPTER VII

"DADS"

"Oh, haven't you had any? Neither have I," Marcia said at once. "We'll have it at once, you and Dads and I." Then remembering she hesitated and added, "That is, if you care to."

Donald cared very much indeed, and followed her eagerly across the bright little yard to the house. Window boxes, holding scarlet geraniums and green creeping vines, were fastened under each of the two windows, and a honeysuckle vine framed the doorway.

Making no apologies for the simplicity and size of her home, Marcia led him directly into a living-room and called softly to a figure under the window opposite. An old man looked up, peering through near-sighted eyes in their direction, then seeing two people he rose and came forward with a serene dignity which his work-apron and gnarled hands could not offset.

"We have a guest for breakfast, Dads. This is Mr. McIntyre."

"I am very happy to meet Mr. McIntyre, and to welcome any friend of Marcia's to our home."

Donald forgot the work-apron, to which curls of wood still clung, forgot the rough gnarled hands, the bent uneven shoulders, and saw only a very beautiful old face. Gentle strength was written in every fine line of it, and sweetness looked out of the dimming eyes.

The skin was highly colored, and the sensitive mouth firm and full, but it was the old gentleman's bearing which fastened Donald's attention. In spite of the extreme of good manners with which his unexpected appearance was met, he subconsciously felt himself subjected to the test of old-fashioned standards, and it put him at once on his mettle.

He was led back to the work-bench and invited to sit on a stool, as though it were the King's throne. "Dads" picked up his tools and went on with his work, talking in a leisurely manner, while Marcia flitted busily about, getting breakfast ready. The conversation touched lightly upon topics of the time, dived once into the deep waters of religion, rose smoothly to the surface, and then swept back almost the span of the old man's life. He had a rich fund of authentic memories of Lincoln, and with gracious ease and gentle humor he entertained Donald, whose interest was as genuine as it was polite.

But even as he listened, Donald was busy making all the observations he could, and the more he saw the more curious and unbelievable became the situation. For here, on the dismal outskirts of a city, living in what was at once dreadful poverty and fastidious beauty, were two people of culture and refinement. It was difficult to reconcile such shifts for comfort as he saw about him, with the niceness of mind and manner that was so striking in Marcia and Dads. Yet that very niceness had managed to make a little place of loveliness out of the cast-off odds and ends from more luxurious homes.

The floor was bare but spotless in a coat of gray paint. The roughly plastered walls, tinted by age a warm ivory, were bare also, though Marcia had gracefully trained a luxurious creeper to festoon its curling green from end to end of a shelf between the two windows. In the center of the shelf stood a few books.

Bright little strips of blue at the windows, and a home-made folding screen, covered with the same pretty figured material that curtained the doorway to Marcia's room gave a look of cheer to the little cottage. And a canary, swinging in its golden cage over Dads' work-bench, nearly burst its little throat in an effort to assure Donald that this was the most beautiful place in the world.

An aroma of coffee filled the air and Marcia, emerging from behind the screen which concealed the stove and washing arrangements, nodded gaily to Donald.

"Almost ready now!"

With swift movements she took a few dishes from the cupboard in the corner and laid them on the table. Donald recognized the cupboard for an old kitchen cabinet, remodelled by Dads' clever fingers to serve as sideboard, china cabinet and desk, and freshened with gray paint. The table also had been rescued, no doubt, from the flats outside, and that was painted a bright yellow. Two packing boxes, yellow also, with an end of each padded in a gay cretonne, were apparently the dining-room chairs, and the guest of honor was to be seated in the one gray rocker. Except for Dads' cot, over which an old patched Indian blanket had been flung, there was no other furniture in the room.

He ate the modest meal to which they were summoned a moment later, with his sense of unreality deepening. He might be in another world, for all the resemblance it bore to his accustomed life. Yet, the longer he stayed the more he felt enchantment in the adventure. In the simplicity and the unpretentiousness of their life there was a beauty that defied analysis. Was it the spirit of gentle love brooding in the place that redeemed it from sordidness? Or the intangible evidences of culture? Or both?

Donald was the quietest of the three, but Dads kept the ball rolling in his gracious, easy way, while Marcia played hostess with more grace than any girl Donald could remember. She was different, he kept saying to himself, not knowing just how, but content to accept her "difference," whether it lay in the courage of her spirit, the pride of her delicately poised head, or the sweet reserve of her deep blue eyes.

He talked most to Dads, but he was conscious always of the slim little figure beside him in her faded cotton dress. He could see, without looking, her capable tanned hands moving about among the cups and saucers, her cloud of dark hair from which a tiny curl kept escaping, and her eyes—it was her eyes he remembered afterward most clearly. Clear and sweet when they rested on Dads, friendly and merry when they touched him, but holding a brooding wistfulness when she thought herself unobserved.

Purposely he lingered over his coffee, trying to extend the strange hour as long as he could because he fancied a subtle change had come into Dads' manner.

Though there was no perceptible difference in his attitude, Donald felt that he had passed the silent test to which the old gentleman had subjected him since his arrival, and he relaxed under it, displaying bit by bit some of his own easy charm. And as a flower opens in the sunshine, so did Marcia then slowly yield to Donald more and more of herself.

It was Marcia who rose first. Reluctantly rising with her, Donald spoke to Dads but looked at the girl before him.

"It seems to me that I have never been so completely satisfied."

"You must have been hungry, coming so far."

"Oh, I don't mean that kind of satisfaction! I mean"—he made a gesture toward the room—"I mean this. There's something here,—the sort of satisfaction in a place that makes you want to come back for more."

He thought he saw the color mount into the girl's cheeks as she turned away with her hands full of dishes, but it was Dads who replied.

"I hope you will come again, Mr. McIntyre. You have contributed to our pleasure too."

Donald offered to help her wash the soiled breakfast things, but Marcia would have none of it.

"There's not room behind this screen for two of us."

"I'll move the screen."

"But I can do it much faster without you, and I'm in a hurry."

"Why, please, the hurry?"

"She looked at him in amazement.

"Why, it's Monday morning, and seven-thirty! And I've got to go to work."

"Oh, do you work?"

"Certainly. Don't you?"

"No. That is—er—not exactly the way you mean. I have begun ——"

And then he stopped because he wasn't sure whether he wanted to tell her about his business of Making Dreams Come True. If he did, would he be able to help her? But if he was to see much of her, how could he refrain from speaking of it?

But Marcia did not notice his blundering sentence, for she was busy with a thought of her own.

"Besides," she added, "if our friendship isn't going to stop at the fence, you must know about me, and Dads can tell you while I clean up the dishes."

So she went to Dads and laid a soft white arm about his neck, and put her fresh young face next to his weathered one.

"Dads, Dads, listen. Donald McIntyre thinks that he wants to come again and see—us. And if he does, he'll have to understand all about me. Take him out in the sunshine, please, Dads, and tell him."

Dads turned her about, laid both hands on her shoulders and for a moment looked deep into her eyes, questioning. She nodded and turned slowly away.

There was a bench out in the yard, close to a bed of violets, and Donald, always after that day, associated their delicate fragrance with a morning of glistening cobwebs, when the bright flash of a bird's

wing cut across the dark green of the woods, and long shadows crept silently away from a vivid yard of flowers, while the gentle sound of Dads' voice told him Marcia's story.

Dads was not really Marcia's father. He had once been a musician whom life had beaten and stripped of everything precious until he had descended in a lonely pride in the scale of life, and ended finally in this shack on the "flats" or "marshes." Here, in this desolate waste, he had lived for five years, making for himself a scant living out of wood carving.

One stormy night, after the musician had spent the evening trying to stop leaks in the roof of his shanty, he had been called to his door by a faint cry. Taking his lantern, he had gone out and searched in the beating rain until he stumbled on a basket left on the ground, in which lay Marcia, a baby.

She was dressed in dainty little clothes, and wrapped warmly in blankets, but there was no indication anywhere of her name, or the date and place of her birth. Who her parents may have been, or why they had deserted her, was a mystery that he had never been able to solve, though for her sake he had tried his hardest. So, finally, with a triumphant sense of having cheated life which had for so long cheated him, he kept Marcia.

"I think," the old man said softly, "she won't be able to remember any real privations. She was always warm and neatly dressed and clean." He spread out his rough, gnarled hands and smiled in gentle reminiscence, a beautiful light spreading over his face. "How I did love to care for her, and see her grow."

He paused and sank into a thoughtful silence which Donald hesitated to break. He had stumbled into a fairy tale, into a place where lives were not padded, but where joy and sorrow, beauty and ugliness, pain and pleasure, lay close to the surface.

"Marcia spoke of going to work," Donald suggested at last.

"Yes," Dads admitted reluctantly. "The days weren't full enough after she finished school. I sometimes think she's a little lonely off here." He sighed. "She doesn't like what she's doing."

"What is she doing?"

"She's behind a counter in one of the big stores in New York. A ribbon counter. She says," he smiled tenderly, "she says she's seeing human nature through a magnifying glass—but it takes distance to lend enchantment to it. She comes home sometimes very tired at night—usually not till seven o'clock. I can always tell her tired nights. She gets cross at the canary, and fries my egg instead of coddling it. I like it coddled but it takes longer. No, she doesn't like her work. She'd rather be ——"

And then he apologized and asked Donald the time and rose a little anxiously, murmuring:

"She can't realize how late it is."

But as they turned toward the door, Marcia came from the house dressed in the shabby suit in which Donald had first seen her. Without looking at Donald, she kissed Dads tenderly, and with a caution to him to take care of himself that day, she turned and held out a hand to Donald.

"May I go with you?"

For a moment their glances locked, then she nodded. He made his farewell to Dads and walked in silence beside Marcia to the tiny stretch of woods. In the cool, clear stillness of it she paused, and looked up at him with something both wistful and defiant in her face.

"I am, you see, just a bit of rubbish nobody loved or wanted."

"That was long ago," he said, "and doesn't matter now."

At that she laughed and flung back her shoulders, and told him if he didn't hurry she'd have to leave him. So he followed her rapid pace through the woods to the trolley, and on the trolley to the ferry and across the ferry to the subway, and it was with reluctance that he left her then.

"When may I come again?" he asked her, holding tight to her hand, regardless of passing throngs.

"In a week."

"A week is a lifetime," he pleaded.

"In a week," she repeated firmly. "Sunday afternoon at four."

Donald walked all the way home. The morning was young, but already the air was warm. His buoyant pace slowed and he took time to look about him and rejoice with the rejoicing world over the wonder and mystery of spring. A hurdy-gurdy, the squabbles of marble players, the rhythmic jump of feet and the chant that went with skipping rope came to his ears. Familiar sights and sounds, all of them, but this morn-

ing they quickened his heart beats and kept him at the pitch of pleasurable excitement he had felt since he first came out of the woods and saw Marcia before him.

And then, quite sharply, he realized that the problem he had gone forth to face and wrestle with had been settled for him. Give up his beautiful dream? Give up his project, when he had so recently and so surely found the best one to help him in it? Even though he couldn't tell her what he was doing, she could, unwittingly, help him much.

No, he'd not give up. In spite of his grandfather's disapproval, in spite of Genevieve's faint doubts, which, now that he was away from her, he felt were greater than he had realized, in spite of everything and everybody, he'd push on.

But he must first see Marcia again and find out why she didn't like her work, and just what she'd rather be doing. Whatever it was, he would help her do it through Jane. "Smashing down fences"—what a queer way to put it! Her words on the trolley had made her thought clearer.

"People's lives are fenced off from each other in a way that is stupid. Some fences are ugly—like mine—and the world never gets a chance to know there's loveliness behind. And some fences are beautiful, and outsiders peering through don't realize that there's not all beauty hidden behind them. What I want to do is some sort of work that will get me through all the fences, and let me see the bright things and the things which had better be hidden."

He could remember just how eager and vivid she looked as she ended—"touching all people in all places with sympathy—that's the only way to live!"

Well, if he persisted in carrying out his scheme, that would be the way he would live too.

CHAPTER VIII

THE COURSE OF TRUE LOVE

IN the weeks that followed, while he was waiting for Jane to finish a piece of writing after which she had promised to help him with his Dream Business, Donald went to the vine-covered cottage in the marshes many times, drawn there by a force he did not take time to analyze, knowing only that he enjoyed with these two people something he had never known before.

His position in the social world forgotten, he found himself sharing in the homely tasks of the household with an unexpected delight in their accomplishment and a feeling that he had been delicately complimented by the permission to join in them. He might have been seen of an evening gaily bantering with Marcia while he wiped the dishes beside her or earnestly discussing some timely topic as he vigorously plied a trowel in the garden next to Dads. Cutting the grass in his shirt sleeves with Marcia's eyes following him as she rested in a hammock, was an activity that came to hold a mysterious fascination, while painting the queer little fence in her companionship was heaven indeed.

For Donald was discovering that Marcia's allure-ment was more than surface deep. It was more than the blueness of her eyes and the soft darkness of her

hair that attracted him. It was more than her unfailing sweetness and gay humor. It was more than her habit of clear thinking which gave purpose to her speech and stimulated his own mind. It was something that bound all these together, and yet was apart from them—an elusive quality of spirit which reached deeper and deeper into Donald's heart. There was something about her suggestive of the unspoiled dewy freshness of a spring morning, the invigorating breeze from a hilltop or the quiet limpid clearness of a mountain lake. When he thought of her, he thought of all the lovely things there were in nature, and he was glad to be living in the same world with her.

But it was, perhaps, her idealism—so like his own—which drew him closer than anything. He could not help talking to her of the purpose that motivated his days, and he found himself met with a comprehension as swift as it was true. To him, who had been lonely for so many years, the perfect companionship of their minds was a miracle, before which he was breathless and unbelievable.

But as Marcia came to know Donald's plans in greater detail, she felt a certain hesitancy about them which her honesty impelled her to try and explain to him.

"You aren't going at it the right way," she told him.

"Why? How?" he demanded, a little hurt by this withdrawal of her first enthusiasm.

Her faint skepticism could be traced to a solid strata of common sense which ran all through her high-mind-

edness and made her question the practicability of Donald's scheme. She wanted him to wait a little longer, think a little harder, before plunging into the affair. To her it seemed that these people he planned to help were not sufficiently deserving, that there were others with greater needs than theirs and that he could somehow carry out his purpose in a larger way.

But before Donald's impatient demand for definite suggestions she fell helplessly silent and Donald triumphantly pointed out that he had to make a beginning somewhere and it would be wicked to waste time when he had so little to waste.

"Better waste time than money," she answered.

"It won't be wasted."

"But it might be more wisely spent."

"Tell me a way!"

But she could not and he had the final word.

"You—and Miss Harcourt—and my grandfather. I'll show you all. There's nothing the matter with my plan. It's all right. I know it's right, because it's based on the right idea. You others are afraid. I'm not."

Time and again they heatedly argued the matter, arriving always at this impasse. Donald would forget the disagreement on his way home, as he went through the patch of woods with a strange singing peace in his heart. He would forget her stubbornness and his annoyance as she clung to her convictions, and he would remember only her light touch on his arm as she smiled a swift apology for imagined rudeness, or the quick grace of her body as she moved about the little cot-

tage, or the music of her gay laugh. These things he would remember, for Marcia was daily growing more and more desirable.

Marcia, however, pondered upon the fact of their opposed points of view, finding in it a grave reason for keeping a firm hold on herself so long as this new friendship lasted. And, forcing herself to forget the magnetism of his personality, she measured him with unprejudiced eyes, discovering, as she did so, a steadily growing consciousness in herself, of a lack in him. While she loved his altruism and his courage, his brave defiance and tender thoughtfulness; while she found herself thrilling to the unspoken admiration in his glances and the warmth of his dear presence, she could not help holding certain reservations in her mind about him.

For it looked to her as though Donald's contentment with his plan was partly laziness, as were his idle days of waiting for Jane to help him get started. And idleness for Donald was a sin. With the gifts of his personality, and his position, he should be better and more fully occupied. He wasn't, by any means, making the best use of his powers. It was a conclusion reluctantly reached and bringing with it a deep sense of disappointment which she could not altogether hide.

Seeing her abstracted and quieter than usual, Donald puzzled for a reason, and finally decided she needed a change. It came to him sharply how monotonous her days of toil and evenings of loneliness must be, and he was overwhelmed with shame at his selfishness in

taking so much and giving so little, so he suggested they go to the theatre.

Had Marcia been any other girl he would have taken her long ago, but his feeling about her was different from anything he had known before. He had had the unspoken idea that so long as he could hide this companionship from the world, so long would it hold its loveliness, and he had come to understand quite perfectly why Dads liked the queer little fence which shut the world away. He wanted, too, to keep people out. He wanted to lock her in his heart, as one locks away an exquisite piece of silk whose lustre and color might fade under strong sunlight and ungentle handling. So could curious eyes and the rude touch of gossips spoil the beauty of his relationship with Marcia.

Her eager acceptance, however, gave him another glimpse of her unceasing hunger for a different world. It was something to be satisfied, and he ached to offer her the help he had to give her, but was withheld by memory of her pride and independence. He would, he decided, see Jane soon and enlist her help. Marcia would be the most difficult client of all, but somehow they must devise a way to help her to realize her dream of a wider life.

In the meantime, as if to make up for his inability now to do all he wanted to do for her, he threw himself whole-heartedly into an effort to make the evening a success. He managed so well that Marcia, sitting close to him in the orchestra seats, forgot her shabby suit and his inheritance, forgot her secret criticism of

his weakness, forgot her stern resolution to hold tight to her own feelings. And in that short evening her imagination went unbridled, her common sense fled before the thrilling nearness of him, and she soared like a bird over dizzy heights of pleasure.

It was when she rose to go and turned to slip her arms into the coat Donald held for her that she came suddenly to earth. For, from a seat three rows behind them, looking curiously at her with unmistakable scorn and contempt on her face was the golden girl of the wedding—Genevieve Powers.

The shock of that cold glance brought Marcia to her senses. She didn't belong here. She knew it. The golden girl knew it, and that single look had told her all too clearly how she had exposed herself to misunderstanding. She slipped into the aisle ahead of Donald, eager now to get home, for she recognized and admitted at once that this first venturing into Donald's life must be her last.

Genevieve waited for them on their way out and Marcia was introduced. A slight bend of her beautiful head was the only acknowledgment Genevieve made of Marcia's presence as she fell into step next to Donald, crowding Marcia forward ahead of her with her own escort.

That slow walk to the doors was an eternity for Marcia. She listened to the other two behind her,—Donald, polished, bantering, at ease, a new Donald, a different Donald, a Donald of another world. For the girl's low thrilling voice and her sumptuous beauty had wrought a swift and subtle change in the man,

and knowing it, Marcia felt an ache rise and swell within her until it choked her throat.

How foolish she had been to dream dreams! She and Donald were miles apart, worlds apart, and she had been mad to think these worlds could ever touch. Right now, in her stiff replies to Genevieve's escort, she was proving her inability to take on the manners and customs of Donald's set. And Donald, though he had made a swifter adjustment to the stark simplicity of her life, would soon miss this note of ease and luxury. He *liked it*—bright lights and idle persiflage and beautiful perfumed women flattering him. He *liked it*. She could tell by his voice.

Realizing that, Donald became a stranger again, someone not to be fully trusted, a man about whom she could wonder many things. If he could talk as he was now talking to Genevieve—saying laughing things about the play which he had thought, with her, was so beautiful—might he not also say laughing things about her when she could not hear them?

By the time they reached the little cottage again Marcia's eyes were shadowed with the weariness of pain and Donald, seeing it, spoke abruptly from a full heart. They were in the living-room, standing in the soft glow of a lamp. Dads, loath to leave the moonlight, was smoking outside.

"You work too hard. I wish you didn't have to."

"I'm not tired from my work to-day," she said quickly. "I'm tired from my play. It—it was dear of you to take me, and I enjoyed it tremendously, but don't ask me again, please."

"I'm going to take you once a week."

"I can't do it, Donald."

"Saturday nights you can. You *need* to play, Marcia. I'm going to see that you do."

A familiar little look of stubbornness came about her mouth.

"I can't play the way you do."

In her words he read, not her real meaning, but an unspoken criticism of himself.

"What do you mean?"

She was quick to seize her advantage and turn the conversation from herself.

"My idea of play isn't—the theatre, and things like that. I'd be bored in no time if I had much of it."

"What is it, then?"

"A change of occupation. A shift from one pleasant piece of work to another. There are so many things I'd like to do!"

She stopped abruptly and glanced at him a little curiously. If it had not been for that look of Genevieve's which hurt her so cruelly, she might not have spoken as she did, but, wounded herself, she struck back a little savagely—and not at the offender.

"What are you thinking?" he asked.

"This." She answered clearly. "You—with time and opportunity to do so much—are doing nothing. How can you?"

"But I've got my work all mapped out! You know that! I'm just waiting for Miss Harcourt."

"That's it! You're—waiting."

He looked at her, puzzled, but she shook her head

refusing an answer, and Donald left her determining in his bewilderment to get to the bottom of this when he saw her again.

It was on the following Sunday afternoon that the affair reached an unexpected climax. Donald had been there all day, and now, with supper over, he and Marcia had gone to the woods to a little bench built between two trees where there was an unobstructed view of the sunset.

All about them the shadows were deepening as twilight fell. From overhead came the sleepy twitter of birds settling comfortably for the night, and the sunset glow, spreading slowly over a pale turquoise sky, seemed to cast a magic spell over the world.

Marcia leaned against a tree, her head thrown back, her glance, from under her long dark lashes, pensive and a little sad. Looking at her, Donald felt that for all her nearness she was very far away, for all her sweet friendliness she was unattainable, and a little fright seized him, impelling him to bend toward her, covering her loosely clasped hands with his.

"Marcia! What is it?"

She stirred a little but let her hands rest quietly under his, and without turning her glance to him, she answered in a low strained voice:

"Life—hurts, to-night, Donald. That's all."

"How,—dear?"

"Oh ——" she waved a hand toward the sunset and the enclosing woods, then let it drop on Donald's.

"It's hard to say. All this beauty to-night—after all,—it's far away—and we can't touch it—or keep

it. In a moment it will fade—and be gone. Just a memory.” She turned her head and her deep, sweet eyes, looking bravely into Donald’s, held pain. “So it is with us, Donald. It’s—been lovely. But we can’t get any closer to it, and”—her voice sank—“it’s almost time for it to fade and become—a memory.”

“No! Why do you say that?” harshly.

She shook her head.

“I just know it has to be.”

“It doesn’t!” He held her hands tightly, unexpected words rushing forth in a torrent. “Why, Marcia! I’ve only just found you. And I’ve been looking for you all my life. Do you think I’m going to let you slip away now? Oh, I’ve been wanting to say these things but I thought it was too soon! And, now you’ve come to mean so much! Listen! Listen, Marcia—Marcia dearest—I love you. I *love* you —”

“Don’t, Donald—please.”

For answer he pulled her closer within his arms and held her with sudden savageness. Marcia lay inert, her eyes downcast, her lips pressed tightly together.

“Look up at me! Look up at me! That’s it. Now tell me you love me, too. You must!” he whispered fiercely.

“But I don’t.”

The little words fell coolly, but Donald, looking eagerly into the eyes so close to his, laughed excitedly.

“That isn’t the truth. You won’t let yourself.”

“Very well, then,” she said a little fiercely, struggling against him. “I won’t let myself.”

"Why?" he demanded.

"Let me go and I'll tell you."

She was thankful that the darkness hid so much,—her excited breathing and her telltale color. It had been a whirling moment, through which she had fought to keep her eyes steadily on a distant point. Now it was over,—and she was safe—but the world was suddenly cold. She shivered a little.

"Why?" he repeated.

"Simply because—you aren't the kind of man I want to love."

"Why?" he asked again steadily.

"You're—you're a waster," she said breathing quickly. "You waste time. You waste opportunities. You have been all these weeks, while you wait for Miss Harcourt. Don't you see? When you waste time you waste *yourself*, and I don't like that. I haven't any use for it. You ought to be used up, all of you, mind and heart and body, in this thing you want to do—this business. You ought not to have a minute for anything but your work."

"I thought you liked my idea."

"I do. I love it. It's fine and beautiful in its conception. But—I've tried to tell you this before—as you've worked it out it isn't *enough*."

Passion swept over Donald again.

"But you love my plan! Don't you see? That's the thing that's so wonderful! We think alike—we feel alike—why, the world has never been so wonderful as it has been since I knew you! The sunshine has never been so bright! Even the birds—I hear

them differently. If it's just the details of my scheme on which we disagree—if that's all, we can work them out again—together. Ah, Marcia—to work them out together."

But she eluded him, and rose, slipping away from his eager arms, shaking her head.

"But that isn't all."

"What else is there?"

"It's you. It's something in you—not in you, I mean. Oh——" She laughed a little and lifted a hand to her throat. "You make it so hard. I don't want to hurt you."

He went close to her, trying to see her clearly through the gathering darkness.

"Tell me."

With her head against a tree, she told him bravely.

"I'm not sure of you."

"You're not sure of me," he repeated it slowly.

"Why do you say that?"

Marcia weighed each word, wanting not to sound harsh, but wanting him to know.

"I keep remembering that girl—Miss Powers—and the way you and she talked together the other night. You were different, Donald. I'd never seen you like that before. You're not that way with me. You couldn't be, because I couldn't make you. Oh, don't you see? There are two of you. One of you has always lived one way—a way I don't know. And the other of you wants to live another. But how much do you want to, Donald? Could you let the other life go? *Which is the real you?* I don't know. I'm not

sure. And—I couldn't let myself love you—or any man—until I was sure of him.”

“So that's it?” Donald said in a low voice.

“Yes, that's it.”

Before the simple courage of the girl Donald fell silent. Then Marcia put out a gentle hand, touched his arm, and, whispering—“Good-night”—vanished into the darkness of the trees.

CHAPTER IX

THE GRAY HENRY

THE same feeling that had made Donald reluctant to take Marcia out into public places had kept him from speaking of her to anyone—even Jane. But as the days went by, and Marcia's evasions and refusals to see him persisted, he sought the Greenwich Village apartment in a lonely desperation.

It was a relief to talk, and though he spoke with restraint, Jane, listening in utter stillness in the shadowed room, guessed more than he imagined, and a little wry smile slipped across her face. But when he had done, she merely smiled gently and made a characteristic remark.

"Enter Marcia. Exit Jane. I wondered why you hadn't been to see me."

"You told me to keep away. You had work to do. But anyway, you've got it just twisted." Donald smiled a little ruefully. "Marcia's made the exit. I can't coax her back, so I'm going to fade into the background and leave the centre of the stage to you."

"Why?" Jane asked coolly.

"Because—er—why,—because Marcia's a client."

"Oh. A client. I see." Jane liked to tease.

"And what, exactly, is Marcia's dream?"

Donald grinned.

"Funny one! 'Smashing fences—walking into

other people's lives ——' I can't explain. She'll have to. That's what I came to ask. When may I bring her to see you?"

But Jane refused a definite answer. Though she had finished her writing, and was ready to help Donald, it had been the thought of Henry Gray which had drawn her into this fantastic affair and she had made up her mind he would be the first client served. How long it would take to get him started for Europe she did not know, but she would not begin work with anyone else until Henry was disposed of, she told Donald. And with that he had to rest content.

But after he was gone and Jane was left to meditate, she found herself growing more and more disturbed. She had told Donald she was going to tackle Henry the next morning,—Monday—and as yet she hadn't the faintest idea what she was going to say or do.

She merely knew that if Henry was to go abroad, he must go at once. He must be rushed through the preparations before he had time to think, because when Henry thought he sat down to it and did nothing else. It seemed to be a job for Henry. No, he mustn't be allowed to think at all. She'd do it for him. She'd tell him—oh! yes!—she'd tell him he must take advantage of the spring rates! Wasn't there a boat sailing Saturday?

Yet even with this inspiration she was not entirely at ease. Doubts and fears continued to circle, like black bats, in the silent places of her mind as she lay in bed. After all, hers was the real work, she thought a bit aggrievedly. She had to meet and conquer. She

had to persuade, argue, overcome. She had to employ mind and imagination. Donald merely drew cheques—a delightful occupation. Well, Henry had been her only child for a good many years, and if there was one thing he had learned to do in that time, it was to *mind*. On that she'd stake everything.

But it was a relief to have morning break, bringing action and the actual grasp of the absurd affair close to her. She dressed quickly and hurried through her breakfast, then went briskly down the narrow stairs to the street.

Directly opposite her was a tiny patch of green lawn and trees, huddled surprisingly between two tall ugly buildings. As the sunlight flung its gold mantle over the rich green, Jane looked at it and felt that she ought to reflect in some measure the hope of spring. But her spirit groaned under its unaccustomed weight of nonsense, and it was with real relief that she entered the dark subway. Here, at least, she was in tune with her surroundings. The darkness and clamor of this underground hole fitted more harmoniously with the clashing of her own thoughts for, in the clear light of day, Jane saw herself for what she really was after all—a sentimental old maid—and the knowledge made her cross with all the world.

However, when Jane played a game she played it well, and her entrance into the familiar office where the Gray Henry worked was made with such buoyancy that everyone looked up. For a brief moment the rattle of typewriters ceased, and friendly voices gave greeting, then Jane, with her head a little higher, moved

on to the rear of the room where Henry stood by his desk watching her approach in silent admiration. Why was it, she wondered, she was always reminded that she was as old as Henry when she was with him? As old as Henry? Never! He was twice her age.

"Well, Jane Harcourt," he said, placing a chair for her by his own, "I'd like to know what it is that's making you look younger all the time?"

"I'm in love," she answered coolly.

Then she looked him critically up and down, and demanded what made him look ten years older than he had two days before.

"I'm in love, too," he reminded her.

"It's not that," Jane said, with quick assurance. "It's monotony."

In this distant corner of the room, with the noisy bustle of reporters coming and going, and the sound of typewriters clicking steadily again, Jane and Henry were as good as alone. Feeling that, he quite unexpectedly showed her, for an instant, a cross section of his gray mind which was flaming red with rebellion.

"You're dead right. The monotony of my life would kill a buffalo. I'm so sick of it! Get up every morning at seven o'clock, exercise for ten minutes, shave for ten minutes, get a shower in ten minutes, eat breakfast all alone in half an hour, buy a paper, pack myself into the subway with other sardines, come down here — And now that you're here so little, this part of the day is as bad as the rest."

Jane's alert eyes watched him narrowly. Henry seldom allowed himself such escape as this.

"I'll never do anything different than I'm doing now. My job's *got* me. I'm grown into it, like a weed in a rut. And nobody else likes the looks of the rut—or the weed"—he grinned,—“so nobody'll ever pull me out. Here all the morning, from nine till twelve,” he went on, “lunch again—usually alone, because I won't stuff my food in as the rest of 'em do. A walk around the same old blocks until one, then leave at five, one day nearer the grave than I was when I came.”

Two spots of color leaped to Henry's cheeks and he struck a clenched hand softly on the desk.

“Subway again! Dinner—alone! The evenings—alone. Three times a week the Y. M. C. A. where I see other poor fools like myself trying to keep young and fit—for what?” He leaned toward her. “To work all your life—and have nothing. To dream all your life—and accomplish nothing!”

The outburst was at once funny and pathetic. Jane had to bite her lips to keep from laughing until she saw the real gleam of tragedy in his eyes. Then she stepped softly about in the sore places of his heart.

“Old dear, I'm sorry. What can I do to help?”

He laughed savagely.

“Get me out of it!” he said, not believing she could.

“Where do you want to get? What do you want to do?”

“You know! What I've always wanted to do. Travel! If I don't get started soon, Jane, I'll never do it.”

"I know it. I'll help you. You can sail Saturday. Come."

She spoke with such a quiet, matter-of-fact air—as though she were asking him to walk to the corner—that he stared at her.

"Are you crazy?"

"Not at all. But you are—nearly. You've spent a good many years taking care of other people. Now you don't have to and it's time to take care of yourself. I never heard you tear loose like that before, Henry, and it worries me. There's a boat sailing Saturday. You can get spring rates if you go now. Come, get your hat; we'll go see about it at once."

"Look here! What's the matter with you? You know what my salary is. How do you think I can afford to take a trip to Europe?"

"You can't afford not to. But don't let that part of it worry you, Henry. I'll attend to it."

"No woman has ever paid for my pleasures," he told her defiantly.

"And no woman's going to!" Jane retorted.

"You'll have to explain, then." He settled stubbornly in his chair.

After pondering a moment Jane began carefully.

"You remember meeting Donald McIntyre at my place a few weeks ago?"

He nodded.

"You know, of course, that he is a very rich young man."

"Of course."

"He is also a very unusual one," Jane said quietly,

"with beautiful ideas that are rooted firmly in rich soil. Do you remember John Everett's quaint theory that artists should be supported until they've had their chance?"

Wondering where all this was leading, Henry nodded again.

"It rather reached home to Donald. He'd had some such idea himself before. He was talking to me about it afterward. He thinks John is right and he wants to give him his chance."

"H'm. That's decent of him. But I'll bet a cold nickel Everett won't let him when it comes to the point."

"I think he will. At any rate, I'm going to approach him on the matter as soon"—Jane paused to smile affectionately at Henry—"as soon as I get you off to Europe, old dear!"

"—a Fund for Eager Travellers!"—The words came dimly back and light broke on Henry's face.

"Oh! So Donald's the one putting up the cold cash for me! Well, tell him thanks just the same——"

"Now, Henry, wait. You don't understand it all. Donald has been entrusted with a certain large fund of money to use in a business way. He has this notion about the way it should be used."

And Jane went on to her task, of making Donald's fantastic idea about realizing dreams seem reasonable. And as she talked, choosing her words cautiously, she saw Henry's expression change from skepticism to puzzled incredulity, from incredulity to interest, from interest to hope and from hope to excitement. At last

she was done but Henry gave a few final feeble kicks of resistance.

"It's living on charity—that's what it is. I've never done it."

"It's nothing of the kind. It's accepting a gift from a brother."

"Brother! He's not even a friend!"

"There's a larger brotherhood, you know, Henry. There aren't many who realize it. Donald is one of the few. It takes a big-minded person to conceive of such a scheme as this, and it takes a big-minded person to accept it. I was sure of you, Henry. That's why I came to you first. I was sure you'd see this thing as impersonally as Donald does. It isn't *he* doing this. Don't you see? Consider him an agent for someone else."

"I wish I could."

"Would it be easier?"

"Much."

"I thought of that, but I knew you'd guess. You know my friends and you know there isn't one of them in a position to do this sort of thing. You know who Donald is—and you'd put two and two together. The tea so recently—and my suggestion to-day. I knew I couldn't bluff you but I believed I could persuade you. Come on, old dear, get your hat."

"No!"

But Henry's face was not as decisive as his voice, and as Jane saw him waver and fall into a pensive silence in which his desire and his pride battled within him, she grew persuasive, outlining eagerly and en-

thusiastically the fun of the sea voyage, touching lightly but deftly on the quiet beauties of old England, the quaint charm of Holland, the grandeur of Switzerland, the tingling excitement of Paris —— He looked at her weakly.

"You've caught me at the psychological moment," he murmured.

"Good! Why, Henry!" she cried, rising, "you'll come back a new man!"

Henry laughed a little sheepishly and rose too, reaching for his hat.

"I'll need to come back a new man. I'm certainly no man now."

"You're a lamb!"

"Putty! And I can't face Donald."

"You don't have to."

So Jane whisked Henry through the business of passports and picture taking and travellers' cheques and the purchasing of a few necessary things, employing in turn the most nonsensical persiflage and the most matter-of-fact manner to keep Henry in an acquiescent mood.

Finally in less than five days from the morning Jane had gone to the office, a dazed Henry, a smiling, stammering Henry, an embarrassed Henry was given a rip-roaring farewell dinner by his friends in the office. He wore a new gray suit, a new gray tie and a gray and striped silk shirt, and Jane kissed him good-bye before them all.

"That—that—that almost makes it worth while!" he said in confusion.

That was Friday night. On Saturday Jane and Donald were celebrating the success of their first venture into business by having a cosy dinner together in Jane's room. Donald was radiant with triumph, as a man often is over a woman's achievement which he fondly fancies is his own, and Jane more cynical than ever.

"I presume Henry is very seasick. Things never go right for him," she observed.

A highly satisfactory meal brought a replete calm. The table was cleared of everything but a dish of nuts and the coffee service. A companionable silence filled the room and crept to the hearts of each of them. A low fire sang softly on the hearth, sending its flickering light over some old bronze pieces on the tiny tip table, and ever and anon darting to the wall to discover a new color in the rich old Indian blanket hanging there. The blue candles, set here and there about the room, were half-way burned down when Donald suddenly reached across the table and laid a warm hand on Jane's.

"Crazy business. But rather fun, isn't it?"

Jane was doubtful. Donald hadn't done the work.

"Anyway, you won't desert me, will you?"

Jane looked down at his hand still covering hers. Desert him? After all, playing godmother to a Prince Boy had its moments of compensation, but she answered teasingly: "No, I'll not desert you—yet."

"By the way," Donald straightened and lit a cigarette, "I've never heard you express a hidden desire. I wish you would. Something within reason, of

course, because I'd want to see that you got it. Haven't you any?"

Jane looked gravely at him.

"Just one."

"What is it?"

"I want some sugar for my coffee. It's in the kitchenette."

CHAPTER X

THE UNEXPECTED HAPPENS

THE day after Henry sailed for Europe, Donald sprang eagerly from the trolley-car and walked through the little stretch of woods to Marcia's home,—he had always gone to her home on the trolley rather than his own car as it seemed to make the distance between their two stations in life less,—for after two weeks of persistent coaxing, Marcia had finally yielded to persuasion and agreed to see him once again.

They were going to have a long talk. She was going to make clearer why she wasn't "sure of him" and why she wasn't "satisfied" with his work. He'd *make* her sure, and he'd *satisfy* her about his plans —

He could do that to-day. Why, already, he had proved his idea was sound, for he had succeeded with Henry!

Donald breathed deeply of the spring sunshine, a feeling of power and exultation filling him. What a world it was! The peace of the Sabbath afternoon lay over it and there was no sound to be heard save the whir of a wing through the still warm air and the gentle whispering of the wind in the tree-tops. His thoughts went happily on.

In the face of opposition he was proving himself right. Jane knew. Soon Marcia would know. Now

just let Jane get started on the rest of his clients and he'd be in a position to go to his grandfather and proudly tell him of his success.

No! He couldn't do that either. Because he and his grandfather had different ideas about success. To the old man, it meant something concrete to be shown for his thought, some definite return for the expenditure of money. Simply seeing people happier than they had been wasn't return enough for an investment of hundreds of dollars.

He couldn't tell his grandfather, after all. He'd have to wait until Mr. Everett had had his book published and was gathering in fat royalty cheques. He'd have to wait until Mrs. Miller's child grew to manhood and proved his fitness to earn a living in the world. He'd have to wait ——

Coming out of the woods he saw the little white house before him and his heart gave a leap of pleasure. What did it matter how long he had to wait? He had Marcia's companionship in the interim of waiting. He had nearly lost it but he'd make her understand to-day he couldn't do without it. Marcia—dear heart! ——

The queer fence was all painted white now. How she must have worked! And she was right. It wasn't half so conspicuous. It took a second glance to realize that broken chair backs surrounded that bright little yard.

Donald paused at the gate, smiling in approval, then he pushed his way through and walked up the little path of ashes and cinder toward the cottage. Pansies

nodded softly to him as he passed, and purple violets lifted their heads to peep at him from under their deep green leaves.

How still it was! Quite suddenly Donald became aware of something unusual in the quiet. He leaped to the tiny porch, and knocked at the door. There was no answer. He knocked again—and waited. Knocked—waited. Puzzled, he turned and looked at the door, knocked again, waited in vain, then walked softly about the house, peering in at all the windows.

Not a sight of her. Not a glimpse of Dads. Not a sound.

Donald reached the front again and sat down in the seat where a few weeks before he and Dads had talked together. Before him was a round bed of iris, their velvet blue petals just uncurling from their tight buds. A bee hovered over them, singing its quiet little tune.

It was queer. But possibly she and Dads had gone off for a little while. Church? Well, he didn't know of people going to church in the afternoon, but perhaps they had. A walk? That seemed more likely. They were out walking. He'd wait—an hour anyway. He looked at his watch. Four o'clock. Yes, he'd wait 'til five.

So he waited. And the sun crept around to the bench, shining so hotly on him that he had to move it back nearer the house. He waited longer. The bee had flown away. A bird flashed out from the wisteria vines, flew to a tree in the woods near by and perched on a limb, chattering its opinion of Donald's unwelcome presence. Donald got up and walked restlessly

about the tiny garden, pulling out his watch. Five minutes after four!

He examined the fence. Parts of it were still sticky. If only it hadn't been finished, he could occupy himself that way. Oh! There was a strip at the back! That broken kitchen chair had had only the first coat. He wondered where the paint was. Probably in the house. Should he look?

Under his hand the door opened. That was reassuring. If they were to be gone long they'd have locked it. They'd probably stroll any moment now through the woods. He looked about for the paint, going to Dads' work-bench first.

Then his heart stood still, for there, exactly in the centre, which was cleared off with all the tools out of sight, was a white piece of paper, folded and addressed to him. He picked it up, opened it, read it hastily once, more slowly a second time in bewilderment, and a third, time for reassurance. Then he stared about him a little dazedly.

The blue strips of curtains hung lifelessly at the window. The vine, trailing from end to end of the shelf over the work-bench, was as still as a dead thing. The gray rocker, the bright little yellow table, the row of books, so poignantly reminding him of Marcia and his strange, sweet hours here with her and the gentle old man she called "Dads," seemed to mock him now. For she was gone. Gone away for good. He didn't know where. He didn't know how long.

He turned the paper over in his hand, looked unbelievably about him and read it again.

"Saturday.

"DEAR DONALD:

"I am going away—Dads and I together. We are all packed at this moment and leave as soon as I finish this note.

"This will surprise you, and hurt you too. I'm sorry for the hurt. I might have waited to see you once again, as I promised, but this seemed wiser.

"It will be useless to try to find me, for I'm going to a new place and to new work.

"Good-bye and good luck.

"'MARCIA OF THE MARSHES.'"

Donald crushed the note savagely in his hand. Gone? Leaving only this curt message for him? Impossible. Gone! Why, she couldn't be gone! It couldn't be true that she had packed up and left with no hint of their plans, no suggestion of their destination. Gone! But where? And why? He must find out. He must know more than this.

Turning abruptly, he went to the partition separating Marcia's bedroom from the living-room, and pulled aside the curtain in the doorway. He could see the iron frame of an unmade bed, a little rocker by the window and empty hooks on the walls opposite. Close at hand by the doorway was a makeshift bureau built of two packing boxes and covered with muslin. The top was bare except for one black hairpin and a tiny handkerchief—forgotten, evidently. He picked it up, looked at it a moment, then tucked it in his own pocket, and moved back into the living-room.

Here he stood looking about him for long unno-

ticed moments. An empty ice-box, the neat putting away of all Dads' tools, the closely shut windows,—all these silently emphasized their mysterious disappearance. It didn't need further searching to hammer home the fact that Marcia and Dads had really gone—and gone for good.

“—to a new place and new work. It will be useless to try to find me.”

A fly came in at the open doorway, buzzing noisily about the still room. Donald stirred and lifted his head. The silence was suddenly unbearable. He went quickly out of the house, shutting the little door tight behind him. And as he went through the little patch of woods, blind now to its beauties, hurt by the memories it brought up, he wondered, with a wry little smile, if he was always to make other people's dreams come true and never any of his own.

CHAPTER XI

THE NIP OF DISAPPOINTMENT

IN the meantime, Jane was experiencing a set-back also. She had risen Sunday morning with a sense of complacency. Henry was on the high seas of life. Forty-five, and having his first adventure. Dear old Henry! What misgivings he had had toward the last. This trip was going to be the best thing in the world for him. He had sadly needed a push into the unknown and Jane was glad she had been the one to give it to him. She had always wanted to do it, and now that desire had been granted.

Her writing had been neglected during that hectic week's work with Henry. She would spend all day at her desk to make up for it. So after a light breakfast she put on her tortoise-shell spectacles and began scratching furiously.

Two hours later there came a knock at her door. Jane didn't hear it. It was repeated and, frowning, Jane glanced at her watch. Eleven o'clock! Who would be coming in the morning? How annoying, just when she was nicely started. Probably Suzanne.

Jane sighed, and without lifting her head answered the third knock.

"Come in!"

Someone entered. Jane scratched on, reached an

end of the page, flung down her pencil, sighed again, took off her spectacles and turned smilingly to greet the girl.

Henry Gray stood before her.

Her smile faded and froze. She rose slowly to her feet and walked up to Henry. She even put two clenched hands on her hips and her voice held no gentleness.

"Well?" she demanded. "Well? What trickery is this?"

"I couldn't do it, Jane,"—Henry was shamefaced, humble, apologetic,—"I simply couldn't. I—I'm too old—I'm too settled—laugh if you want to——"

"Laugh!" fiercely.

And then suddenly she wanted to. She wanted to laugh and scold in the same breath. For Henry, standing like a guilty child awaiting punishment, was as funny as he was pathetic.

"How did you manage this?" she asked briefly. And meekly he made answer.

"I came back on the pilot."

She looked at him in silence a moment, then shook her head, impatiently.

"Henry! Henry!"

But her reproachful voice held tolerance, so Henry breathed a sigh of relief and put his hat down on Jane's desk on top of an ink bottle.

"I was so afraid you'd be cross," he ventured.

"Cross! The wrath of the gods can't compare with my fury at the present moment, Henry, but it would be wasted on you. Sit down."

She took a chair opposite him, shaking her head at him again in despair.

"How I worked!" she murmured.

"You've no idea how I hated to come. I've dreaded this moment more than I dreaded the whole trip."

"Dreaded the whole trip! Why, Henry, you *wanted* it!"

"Yes, but I dreaded it more than I wanted it. It—it was fearful to think about, really. Oh, I don't suppose you understand. You're so different. But—why, Jane, I've never travelled anywhere much, you know, except up and down-town in the subway! And suddenly I was set adrift on the ocean. I tell you it was—it was simply awful to contemplate."

His anxious eyes had seen sympathy softening Jane's face, and a little whimsical smile touched his lips. He went on more easily.

"You know, Jane, there's something safe about subways. You're packed in so tight you can't lose your way. And you don't have to know it anyway. You just trust the engineer. It's—it's comfortable.

"But going to Europe! Travelling on a huge steamer across a trackless sea! I got lost, Jane, on the boat before we'd been out five minutes. And when I thought about having to find my own way,—over there,—where people can't even speak English——" He shook his head. "I got panicky."

An old wheel horse wretched without his harness. Well, she wasn't surprised.

"When you go with me, I'll go," he promised her.

"You're hopeless, Henry." But she smiled affectionately as she said it.

He pulled out his pipe and filled it in a meditative silence.

"You know, Jane, when you stop to think about it, you and Donald are embarked on rather a dangerous business."

"Fears for the fearful," she answered lightly.

"But it is," he insisted. "Why, you took me away from a job that was paying my existence in this miserable world, without any guarantee of my getting it back on my return!"

"You're always trying to plan for the future, Henry. Consider the lilies."

"But I'm no lily. And, anyway, why shouldn't I plan for the future? The present doesn't hold a great deal."

"But you shape your future somewhat by the present, you know. Oh, I understand how it happened! It was what I expected, only I hoped I'd forestalled it. But I'm disappointed. I really think the trip would have made life over for you."

Henry packed the tobacco in his pipe with a careful thumb, lit it and leaned back.

"It's made over now," he muttered.

"What?"

Henry blew a cloud of smoke into the air.

"I said it's made over now."

"Just what do you mean?" crisply.

There was a silence while Henry puffed steadily. His next words fell like a thunder clap on Jane's ears.

"I've used the money another way."

"You've—what?"

"Jane, dear. Do pay attention. Are you getting a little deaf? I've used the money another way."

Jane gasped, staring at him incredulously.

"Do you call that honest?"

He nodded agreeably.

"In this case, yes. Wait till you hear about it."

But for all his apparent poise he was uneasy and in spite of himself he became, in his vague explanation, a little worried.

"I didn't mean to. I didn't plan it, I mean. But right after you came to the office—last Monday, was it?—I happened to hear of—of—someone who was in a worse way than I was. At least, it seemed so to me. I'm old, Jane. I'm settled. I've had my chance. If I'm bored, it doesn't make any difference to anyone except me. But I couldn't stand by and see somebody else longing for life without trying to give 'em a slice. Because I *know* what that's like. I"—he shook his head—"I just decided—when I got out in the harbor—I'd rather do that than go to Europe." He looked appealingly at Jane. "Donald *gave* it to me, didn't he? To make a dream come true? Well, I made a mistake in my dreams, that's all, and found it out in time. Do you think he'll care much? You'll tell him for me, won't you?"

"I don't know," Jane answered curtly. "To punish you I ought to make you face him yourself. I haven't any idea how he'll take it. But if you want to know what *I* think,—I think you've gone a step too far."

"I know I have," Henry agreed humbly. "I know I have. But I'm not sorry."

An old fool, that's what Henry was. An old fool. And Donald was a young fool. And the two of them had got her all tangled up in their lives so she couldn't get free. Donald needing her one way—Henry, needing her another. Two fools. She sighed—and qualified her opinion—and smiled.

"Two dear fools," she thought.

After Henry had gone, Jane set about to draw comfort from this misadventure, and found it in the belief that, with his first failure, Donald would come to a realization of the futility of his plan. He might, with matters gone so awry this time, be discouraged and drop the whole matter. The prospect was hopeful.

But Donald did nothing of the kind.

He came to Jane with his own disappointment locked in his heart. Marcia's disappearance had cut too deep for words. He would say nothing of her to Jane until Jane questioned him. He would, however, plunge into his work, push through the plans for his other clients and get other dreams started on their way to realization. Marcia might be gone, but he still had his business. He'd make it fill his life.

So when Jane broke the news to him he was too stunned to appreciate it, and she had to repeat it.

"Henry's come back."

"Come back!" He stared at her incredulously, without quite understanding.

"He didn't even go."

Donald continued to stare for another moment, then

he laughed shortly. Jane nodded to herself. It was as she thought.

"What's he going to do now? Hand the money back?"

"No. He's—spent it another way." Watching him narrowly she went on. "He had another dream. He made a mistake. He just found it out at the last minute. He gave all the money to somebody else who needed it more than he did."

There was a little moment of silence, then she was surprised to see him lift his head and laugh again, but gaily this time.

"What do you know about that! The good old scout! 'Made a mistake in his dreams!' 'Gave it to somebody who needed it more than he did!' You know, now that I think about him, he's just the kind to do a thing like that, don't you think so?"

Jane made a contemptuous noise. Had she fancied one jar would unseat Donald from his hobby horse? He was the sort that would stick to a bucking broncho as long as the girths held.

"What I think," she replied, "had better be left unsaid."

CHAPTER XII

BEGGARS GO RIDING

SUZANNE happened to be the next client Jane served. Suzanne who craved more than anything else to be a professional dancer even unto the fiftieth year. She came into Jane's apartment late one evening in her kimono, a drooping figure with a tragic face.

"Why, Suzanne, what is the matter?"

"Oh, Lady Jane! I couldn't go to bed—or to sleep—or stay alone any longer! I'm so unhappy! I've got to go home, and I'd rather *die*."

Thus wailed Sue, with her head against Jane's knee. Jane thoughtfully regarded the girl's woebegone face down which tears fell without in the least marring its prettiness.

"What'll I *do*? Can't you suggest something? I'd rather *die*, I tell you."

Jane wanted to let her die, for she was not in the mood to play fairy godmother. Her recent defeat with Henry rankled yet, but Donald's sublime faith in her loyalty to him still held her.

"Hush, while I think."

It was rather a pitiable tangle, she could see that well enough. Suzanne's parents, lonely without her and fearful for their daughter's safety in an unknown city, had ordered her back to the Middle West again. She had had a year of freedom, they pointed out, and

she was in debt at the end of it. With some harshness they stated that they would send her no more money. If her salary couldn't cover her expenses—as it apparently couldn't—she would have to come home. And quickly. Or they would come and get her.

It was an awful thing, she sobbed, being the only daughter of well-to-do parents. You were simply under their thumb. She didn't see how other girls managed to break away from the parental control. How did they contrive to meet the financial problem? If she could only stand discomforts and privations—but she never had—and there were so many pretty clothes in New York—and so many good times—that—and now she was going back to that stupid, stupid town and simply sit down and grow old. Never dance—never even have the *chance*, which had been her secret reason for coming to the city—wasn't life just too perfectly awful?

There was no question in Jane's mind that dancing was music and poetry, life and love, to Suzanne. She had seen her in inspired moments when all the furniture was crowded recklessly against the wall and Sue's roommate was ordered to the piano. Then Sue's fluttering spirit freed itself from the constraints of a difficult world and, to the soft, musical accompaniment, took shape before even Jane's practical eyes.

While they sat in the dim lamplight, the sound of a familiar melody came faintly through the wall. Sue, lifting her head, listened a second, then springing to her feet she flung her kimono from her and began dancing.

In her soft, white nightgown her slim, girlish body was more graceful than Jane had ever seen it, and watching her, the older woman felt a deep, tremulous stir within her. For Suzanne had caught the mood of the music and was most poignantly expressing its hungry eagerness, its faint yearning hope. Poised for a last moment, with her white arms reaching toward something her wide eyes glimpsed, she seemed the embodiment of all Youth craving an elusive Beauty, and Jane's last weak defence fell. Suzanne might never grasp the Beauty she dreamed of—Jane knew that well enough—but she might at least have the chance to try.

She dropped again at Jane's feet.

"You see?" she breathed. "I can do it! I love it!"

And she went on to explain excitedly how, although her parents were perfect dears, all their knowledge of the art of dancing had been drawn from the condemnatory newspaper articles on "Jazz and the Flapper." To them, the mere idea of Sue's wanting to become a professional was abhorrent. Sue couldn't even talk about it to them.

"If only I could get them here, and let them see for themselves. *Then* they'd understand."

"Well, that's just what we'll do," said Jane with quiet determination. "I'll give you the money to take a summer course this summer and we'll get them here in the fall."

"*You'll* give me—why—what do you mean?" Suzanne's wide, amazed eyes in her flushed face made her look more childish than ever, but she spoke with

resolution. "If you think *you're* going to lend me the money——" She shook her head positively. "You've often called me a butterfly, Lady Jane, but you've never called me a pig."

"I'm not going to lend you *my* money, my dear. Listen, Suzanne, and see if you can understand business terminology for a brief moment."

"You mean thing! I'm a business woman myself!"

Jane patted her hand.

"All right then, it won't be difficult. It's this way. I have recently been made an administrator for a fund of money that has been placed in my hands. I am limited as to its expenditure, because it can be used only for one certain purpose."

Sue drew her kimono about her and clasped her knees.

"You sound so mysterious—and exciting! Go on!"

"It can be used only to realize one dream of certain deserving people. I am privileged to use my discretion in choosing the fortunate recipients. If I did not believe you had a decided talent for dancing, I should let you trail westward to your parents without a thought. But I've seen you dance, and I believe your wish is really deep-rooted and sincere. So I feel justified in offering you enough for a summer course in dancing in the best school in the city."

Suzanne could only gasp.

"Why! Why! It's a regular fairy tale! I never heard of such a thing before! I never dreamed such things could happen! And you are the fairy god-

mother, aren't you? How *lovely*, Lady Jane!" Sudden tears filled Sue's eyes. "It makes you believe in—in—goodness again, doesn't it? What a perfectly beautiful old lady she must have been!"

"Who?"

"Why, the one who died and willed her money to you to take care of this way!"

"Oh."

It was unnecessary to enlighten the girl. Jane was thankful enough that she was less difficult than Henry. So she smiled down into the radiant, wistful face below hers, and touching a warm cheek, answered lightly:

"It is a fairy tale, my dear, but it's one you may believe."

"Oh, may I really? But would it be right, Lady Jane? Would it be perfectly all right to take this chance now that it's come?"

The girl was quivering with emotional excitement, hope and piteous appeal holding her strung taut. Simultaneously with Jane's nod of acquiescence, she gave a great sigh of relief, and jumping up, she pirouetted in her joy. Then, still palpitant and unbelieving but athrill with delight, Sue brought paper and ink and at once composed a letter to her parents in which she told them that her work was terribly important just now, and she couldn't possibly leave until September. But she had plenty of money to carry her through until then and they needn't worry their blessed old heads any more. And wouldn't they please, please, please, come to New York in the fall and spend a week here before they dragged her back to the dead-

liness of their home town? If they would, then they'd *understand—everything.*

Suzanne sealed the envelope, kissed it for good measure, swept her kimono about her, tossed her bright hair away from her radiant face, and cried with dramatic intensity:

"I shall *never* forget this, Lady Jane. You have prevented the death of my spirit. I'm going to devote my whole *soul*—my whole *life*—to my profession, and show you that I am worth this."

Jane, replying nothing, watched an exalted Sue, a Sue aflame and a-tiptoe, reach the door where she paused, turned and after a second of hesitation, asked with elaborate carelessness:

"By the way, what's happened to that stunning looking man you entertained here a few weeks ago?"

"That stunning looking man," Jane answered, amusedly, "still comes to see me occasionally. I'll call you some time if you are in."

"Oh, do!" Sue gathered her kimono more closely about her, and opened the door. "Well—good-night."

"Good-night."

Jane, alone again, and analyzing Suzanne's character, could not get rid entirely of a feeling of doubt. But she kept her doubts to herself and spoke only of her success when Donald came again to see her.

He was delighted and wanted to map out their campaign for the others without further delay. So there was a long conference that same evening in which seemingly insurmountable difficulties were eventually,

made to disappear, for nothing could stand before the combination of Donald's persistence and Jane's common sense.

It was decided that Jane should approach little Mrs. Norton with the same argument she used for Suzanne. Jane anticipated no resistance here, unless possibly the husband—an unknown factor—might be the kind to look upon such a proceeding as useless nonsense, and, in stupid selfishness, forbid his wife's accepting anything from a stranger.

"If he's that sort of a person," said Donald, "just find out something *he* wants like the deuce, and make him the same offer!"

Jane smiled and nodded.

In approaching John Everett and Miss Thorne, there would be pride to overcome. But Jane was going to fling John's words back in his teeth,—his pet theory which he had expounded so many times about rich people supporting artists until they'd had their chance. Without giving Donald's name, she would tell John she had found such a man.

"There'll be absolutely no come-back," Jane said positively. "I know John, and if I offer him five thousand dollars to live on for a year, he'll give up his present job and get to work like a shot."

"Can he write a book in a year?"

"I think so. He used to do two."

In persuading Miss Thorne, Jane felt that the gentle lady's dire necessity was in their favor. Miss Thorne had to do something—or starve. / There was just one thing she was fitted to do and wanted to do. The

alternative to starvation was becoming a dependent on relatives. If she accepted help from an unknown source, she would have to swallow her pride immediately. If she refused help, she'd have to swallow it sooner or later at the relative's house.

"The choice is difficult. She will flutter and fuss and make me very tired but I think she'll give in to us in the end."

Donald nodded.

"And Mrs. Miller?"

"Oh, there'll be no difficulty there at all. Mrs. Miller isn't taking help for herself. She's taking it for her boy, you know. She may work herself to skin and bones for the rest of her life to pay you back, but she'll put up no argument now."

And matters did indeed turn out as Jane had prophesied. For as April slipped into May, and May approached June, Suzanne had become the blazing star of her class, vivaciously twinkling in the heaven of her desire. Mrs. Miller, with a heart-break of joy in her voice, reported that her boy was established in the Special School in Maine, where he would stay through the hot months, and already his little feet were marching with eager steadiness down the shining path of knowledge which the experienced woman at the School knew so well how to open for him.

Yes, the whole crazy business was going with greater success than Jane had anticipated in her most hopeful moments. For here was Mrs. Norton, writing a little note that "music had opened a door which let light and sunshine into her life." And here also was Miss

'Thorne, busily concerned in outfitting her Tea Room in the place she had finally chosen, the proud, gentle delight in her face a gratifying thing to see. And John Everett—Jane smiled to recall his first visit after he had decided to accept the mysterious offer of help.

He had come dashing in with a few pieces of paper badly mussed in his hands.

"I'm going to write a shining book, one that has faith and ideals. The world needs it. I'm going to write of the beauty of realism, not just its sordidness—— Listen to this and tell me what you think of it."

And Jane, listening, nodded.

"Yes. You've got a good idea. It's the right time to present it. But you've got to do a lot of thinking with a theme like that—and a lot of work—— You've never done anything but action stories, have you?"

No. But here was his chance. He was through with pot boilers. Something worth while this time. Oh, he knew it meant work! Hadn't he written, five years before? Oh, he'd been all through the mill! But he was prepared to work. He wanted to. He loved work. As soon as he had this in a little better shape in his mind, he'd break the news at the office that they'd have to get on without him, and then he'd settle down.

"It won't be long!" he said exultantly.

Yes, affairs were progressing smoothly, and Jane was satisfied.

But Donald was not.

He would go to Jane's apartment and listen in gratified silence as she recounted each success. So long as he was there, her pleasure kindled his, but after he had left her and gone back to the big still house in which he lived, there seemed to be something missing in his joy.

At first he thought it was because he wasn't able to share his success with Marcia. He went to the little cottage several times, hoping against hope that she might have forgotten something and come back, or that Dads, accustomed to his garden and his work and his tiny home, might have grown lonely in a strange environment and persuaded Marcia to return.

But there was no such glad surprise awaiting him. Each time the little cottage looked more and more desolate. Spiders spun their webs unhindered all over dear possessions. Dust settled more and more thickly on the furniture. The little vine, trailing from end to end of the shelf, dried up, shrivelled and turned brown. Finally Donald gave up going.

He determined to put Marcia out of his mind, for it became apparent to him at last that he would never find her. Inquiries at the store where she had worked had been of no avail. She had given notice she was leaving, but had made no explanation to anyone. Her disappearance was as final as it was mysterious.

But try as he would, Donald's Business did not absorb him, and could not make him forget. He wanted to find other clients and push on the good work, but Jane knew of no more and had besides begun another piece of writing. Donald's contacts with hungry-

hearted people came to him only through Jane, so he was at a loss.

As June drew to a close, bringing with it the hot stultifying breath of summer, Donald's dissatisfaction became an active restlessness, which drove him by day and tormented him by night. His usual activities along athletic and social lines served now only to kill time instead of bringing the keen enjoyment they had in the past. What was the matter? He earnestly tried to find out and discovered that one question only led to another.

Take his work, first. He was doing what he wanted to do at last. He was proving his idea successful. He was making other people happy, yet he could not make himself so. Why? Did the fault lie with him, or was there, as Marcia had long ago said, something wrong with his scheme? It didn't absorb him, that was true. Ought it? Why didn't it? If he found other clients—six or a dozen more—and realized their dreams, would he be any better off? He would be busier, temporarily, but would he be more permanently happy? Where did happiness lie, anyway? In work or in people? Did the reason for his discontent lie in the fact that he missed Marcia more than he would acknowledge?

Unaware of the effect all this doubt and uneasiness was having on his spirits, he was surprised to have Jane abruptly question him one evening.

"Aren't you feeling well, Donald?"

"Perfectly. Why?"

"You aren't yourself. What's wrong?"

Donald hesitated. But Jane deserved his confidence. And it would be a relief to talk.

"I don't know. I really don't know."

"Something is the matter?"

"Y-yes. I'm not satisfied. I'm doing what I've always dreamed of doing, yet——"

He fell into meditation and Jane watched him in silence.

"Are you seeing Marcia much these days?" she asked, suddenly, and nodded to herself as Donald started from his absorption.

"No. Not at all. She's gone away." And after a moment—"Didn't I tell you?"

"No."

Donald drew a long breath. There was a blessed comfort in telling of her disappearance. Even though Jane had no explanation to offer, Donald felt better because she shared his disappointment. He made disjointed reminiscences, lured on by Jane's sympathetic silence.

"You miss her," Jane said quietly at last.

"Yes."

Miss her? His admission brought it clearly home to him. It wasn't the frenzy of frustrated desire that hurt him. It was the loss of something evanescent and lovely. Something for which he had always searched and found only in her. Something he needed to make life worth living. Her going had left a void that nothing he had found could fill, and quite suddenly he knew that he never would find anything to fill it so long as he stayed in the hot, stifling city.

He must get off into the woods, somewhere where there was quiet and peace and loveliness, where there was the song of birds and still sunlight and high motionless mountains. Marcia would be nearer him there than here, and with her unseen presence to help him, he would think up a new way, a better and bigger way to carry out his idea so that it would fill his life, because he couldn't go on like this.

"You know, Miss Harcourt," he said abruptly, "I don't believe I can stick it here all summer. I think I'll go away."

"That's a good idea, Donald. Where will you go?"

"To the Adirondacks. I've had an invitation—I thought at first I'd turn it down—but I think I'd better go. It's to be a big house-party, but I'll have chances to ——"

"Get away by myself and think," he was going to say, but checked himself suddenly. However, Jane seemed to understand, for she nodded.

"If anything comes up—with our clients, you know—if anything goes wrong, let me know, will you?"

"Oh, your beggars are all riding horseback as though they were born in the saddle. Go along, Donald, and don't worry."

CHAPTER XIII

MOUNTAIN TOPS

Hour by hour the train drew Donald into the cool, spicy heights of vast mountain forests. And, as he had anticipated, the farther he got from New York, the closer Marcia seemed to come to him, but instead of finding the comfort he had expected in her imagined nearness, he discovered to his surprise that the higher he went into the wilderness, the lower sank his spirits. For as Marcia's memory became more poignant, his desire for her grew greater.

He wondered, with a sudden revulsion of feeling, why he had come? Was there ever any good in running away from trouble and disappointment? There were to be twenty-four people up here, and he knew none of them except his host's family. He had thought that meeting new people in his uncertain frame of mind would be easier than seeing familiar friends, but now he wasn't sure. He wished he hadn't come. He'd have to chatter so much. In this mood the great forests, glimpsed through the window-pane on both sides of the train, seemed to close him in until he felt suddenly like a prisoner. Why *had* he come?

He stepped off the train at sunset the second day, and in spite of the attitude of mind which had fastened on him, he drew a breath of delight. All about him black mountains leaned against a scarlet

sky. From the deep gloom of the woods came the fragrant breath of pines, and the absolute stillness, following in the wake of the departing train, fell like balm on his troubled spirit. If ever a soul was to be at rest, it would be here.

Yet, when an automobile truck swept down the black-oiled road toward the station and Donald, with his suitcase and small trunk, was crowded into it next a rugged, diminutive and altogether speechless man, the brief moment of ease vanished. He wished again he had not come. He had no business to be here. He ought to have camped right at Marcia's cottage until she turned up again,—he had never been able to believe she wouldn't turn up again—and a horrible and quite uncontrollable fear that he would lose her by being so far away took possession of him.

For an hour they followed the winding black road, seeming at each turn of it to leave civilization further behind. Donald soon gave up trying to loosen the taciturn little man's tongue, and the spell of the North woods wrapped them both in its mysterious silence. In this manner for fifteen miles the two men travelled without communication, their bodies touching, their spirits as far apart as the poles. Even jolting against each other failed to remind them of each other's presence.

The oiled road ended abruptly at a little store, and they climbed out, transferred their baggage into a buckboard, and journeyed two more miles over a corduroy road.

By that time night had fallen, and the stillness of

the dusk gave way to strange, mysterious noises. Once a frightened deer stared with wide eyes at their swinging lantern, and small creatures of all kinds flashed silently across the trail. Stars began to prick through the dark vault overhead, and in the immensity of the silent world about him, Donald experienced a feeling of sadness. The deep, solemn splendor of these mighty mountains filled him with loneliness.

Abruptly they came out beside a lake, over the smooth surface of which travelled faintly the sounds of civilization. On the far side Donald discovered lights, and gradually made out the outline of the house. As they approached it, following the shore, the driver made his first voluntary remark since asking Donald's name at the station.

"Here we be," he vouchsafed, stopping his horse in the gravelled driveway.

Stepping across a wide verandah into the huge log building, Donald found himself in a room fully sixty feet long. It was in darkness save for the leaping red light from a great stone fireplace on his right, which danced over deep leather chairs and davenport, picked out a gay Indian blanket flung over a grand piano in the corner, and dazzled the eyes of a stuffed deer's head on the wall. In its wavering glow Donald discovered the shining black and the faintly gleaming white of bear rugs scattered over the floor.

At this moment a tall slender man opened a door on the left and came out, his hand outstretched in welcome.

"Don, old boy." Malcolm Keith clapped a hand

on his friend's shoulder. "I hope you'll forgive me. We had planned a hike up 'Crooked Nose' to-day and didn't get back in time to meet you."

"Perfectly all right," Donald answered. "I was excellently cared for by your voluble man." He nodded toward the small chap who was disappearing with Donald's suitcase into a room beyond Malcolm's.

"You had ample time to search your soul, didn't you?" Keith said laughingly as he moved to the table to switch on a light. In its soft radiance Donald's first impression of a room lavishly furnished but still in harmony with its natural surroundings was proved right. There was everything here for comfort and pleasure, yet the note of rustic simplicity had somehow been kept.

"I'm certainly glad to see you, Don," Keith said heartily. "We've got the jolliest crowd we've had yet. Corkers every one of 'em. But I'm not going to keep you standing here, because dinner will be ready in a moment, and everybody is too hungry to be polite. If you aren't here for the first rush, I won't guarantee that I'll be able to save you even a smell!"

At that moment Mr. and Mrs. Keith emerged from the hidden business-end of the house, an aroma of various delicious smelling things following them through the swinging doors. They greeted Donald, then little Mrs. Keith, glancing down at her simple wool jersey dress, said smilingly:

"You see, there's no formality here. We are dressed for dinner. Mr. Keith is in his knickers,—and I am still wearing what I put on this morning."

"Oh, I sha'n't change. I've been warned once," Donald replied laughing. "I'm going to be the first in line."

He followed Malcolm to one of the dozen small rooms opening off the big living-room on the ground floor.

"The men are all down here," Mac explained, "and the girls are in the balcony."

Glancing up, Donald saw that broad stairs led up to a sort of mezzanine floor, enclosed by a balustrade. At that moment a door opened above, a girl came out, and Genevieve Powers waved to him from over the railing.

"Greetings!" she called gaily.

"And to you!" he answered, moving to meet her as she came down the stairs. "This is a surprise."

"A pleasant one, I hope." Genevieve held out both hands, giving him her cool, provocative smile.

"That's always understood."

"Thank you. It is for me too. It's been such ages since I saw you."

"A lifetime!" Donald declared.

When he came out a group of young people were gathered about the piano where Genevieve sat playing. Others were talking in couples in the deep window-seats on either side of the fireplace. His entrance was the cue for a general uprising.

"Just in time, Don!" Mac leaped forward and spread out his arms, pretending to hold back a ferocious mob. "I can't restrain this pack of famished females any longer!"

This brought a chorus of protest and laughter and a gaily colored cushion came whirling through the air. Mac caught it neatly and sent it flying back. There was a surge toward the far end of the living-room where the long dining-table was spread before another fireplace. Donald was caught up in the rush and found it impossible not to fall into the mood of the hour. He was soon seated on one of the long benches that ran about the table, kicking with his feet against the legs of it, his arms linked through those of two pretty girls on either side of him as the twenty-four of them swayed from side to side, chanting lustily on two notes a foolish ditty.

"Monday! Soo-oop!"

"Tuesday! Chick-en!"

"Wednesday! Roast-beef!"

"Thursday! Ha-ash!"

"Friday! Fi-ish!"

"Saturday! Baked beans!"

"Sunday! Ice-cream!"

"You bet we're glad we're here!"

Two rigid-faced Indians, undisturbed by the riotous crowd, brought in tremendous platters of two or three kinds of meat, and enormous bowls of vegetables, passed them solemnly once, deposited them on the table and departed, leaving the guests to help themselves. Donald was suddenly glad he had come. It was good to laugh like this. It was good to be merry. It was good to forget care and work. This was what life was meant for—fun and fellowship. He had almost forgotten this part of existence, but he suddenly

realized it had its place. He needed it. Yes, he was glad he had come. He met Genevieve's eye and she flashed him a warm smile. It was nice to have her here, too.

After dinner there was dancing, some musical nonsense by two or three of the men, and then, as a round white moon climbed up into a black sky, they all got their heavy coats and drifted in small groups and couples, out into the magic of moonlight.

Donald found himself walking on a pine path along the water's edge. Genevieve's hand was on his arm, her fragrant hair close to his cheek, her deep eyes black pools of mystery. She led him to a little summer house built out over the water, and stood in silence, watching the silvery ripples faint and fade into the shadows near the shore. Donald, leaning against a post, looked at her in idle interest. A few moments before, in the house, she had been one of the gayest of the gay, a warm, vibrant, compelling figure. Now that gaiety had all dropped from her and, motionless in her long cape, she was as aloof and alone as a piece of statuary.

He thrust his hand in his pocket a moment and then, stepping close to her, held it out. She stirred, glanced at him, then down at the coin he offered, and shook her head.

"Oh, they're worth far more than that!"

"How much? I'll pay any price," he countered.

"Would you? I wonder. Well—you—ought to. I was thinking of you."

"I'm flattered. And more curious than ever."

A little smile touched her lips and her voice held a faintly wistful note. It was always low and rich, but at times it held a thrilling quality that could make her most ordinary remark meaningful. So it was to-night, and Donald, listening carelessly at first, found, before she finished, that she had stirred him as of old.

"I was thinking of the night long ago—yet not so long—when you came to me and told me—many things. Do you remember?"

"Perfectly."

"I enjoyed that evening, Don, more than any I've ever spent with you. You showed me your real self. I've always wanted to know it—and I like to remember you let me—once." Her manner changed. "You've been busy, I suppose, ever since, carrying out the plan you were telling me?"

"Yes. I've been busy. But I hadn't forgotten you, Genevieve."

She laughed, keeping her voice nicely balanced between lightness and seriousness. "No? That's a great relief. I really thought I'd failed in friendly sympathy or something. I'm sorry if I did."

"No, really, it wasn't that ——"

"You know," she interrupted, "you were the first one to discover that I like to talk on worth-while subjects occasionally. I do get tired of froth, don't you? So I couldn't help but hope you'd come back and do it again. I missed you," she ended with charming candor.

"That's nice of you. I really thought, Gen, you were simply being polite that evening."

"Now! You see? You misjudged me, and I was the one to suffer! You'll have to make amends."

"I'll do my utmost. Tell me how and I'll begin at once."

She pondered, then turned to him with grave sweetness.

"Very well. First, you shall tell me how your plan is working out. I've often wondered."

Surprised and flattered by this unexpected interest, Donald told her. He hadn't wanted to take his mind back to it. He had enjoyed the escape, but strangely enough, he found his old enthusiasm returning as he recounted his success to an eager and attentive Genevieve. Her apparently genuine pleasure brought back in large measure his satisfaction with his work and it became, for the moment, real again and complete.

When he had finished, she laid a hand on his for a brief second, her eyes filled with approval and admiration.

"Don, I think it's wonderful. I'm just so awfully proud to know you. When I compare you with other men, I can't help but think that you've already done more good in a few weeks than the rest of the crowd will in a lifetime!"

"Nonsense!" he laughed, but Genevieve did not miss the note of pleasure. "But that's nice to hear, Gen. Because when I came up here to-day I was—seedy. Simply disgusted with myself and my idea."

"Really?" She was all sympathy. "And do you feel better now?"

"Much. I'll get my perspective back if I stay up here long enough."

"You've been working too hard, I'm afraid, making other people happy." Then lightly—"Who's going to make you happy, I wonder?"

Her question brought Marcia at once back to mind and he at once tried to shut her out. Thoughts of Marcia meant a return to that discontent and loneliness which he had just blanketed. He answered quickly, banteringly.

"You'll have to while I'm here."

"Perhaps—we'll see."

In the days that followed Genevieve and Donald were constantly together. At first there were moments when the picture of Marcia in her simple gown of faded blue cotton would rise up and stand next to a sumptuous, glowing Genevieve. But under the stimulus of Genevieve's immediate presence, Marcia became more and more a dim figure, his hours in the bare little cottage a sweetly remembered incident of distant days. That time was a dream, an idyll of a summer, precious while it lasted, but bound to fade like the roses of June.

The past was a dream, the present was the reality. It must have been what he needed, he argued, for already he was himself again. In the long days of outdoor activity, where everything was provided in the way of entertainment, Donald found his old zest returning. He swam, rode and drove. He danced and paddled. And Genevieve was nearly always with him. Genevieve, lazy, alluring, stretched in a canoe in a colorful dress, her dark head against a bright pillow.

Genevieve, smart in black and white, an erect figure on horseback. Genevieve, alert and laughing, all in white, moving with swift, sure grace over a tennis court. Genevieve, dressed in a pale evening gown, lovely, fragrant and elusive in the moonlight. Genevieve, strangely sweet and fun-loving, wistful and provoking — More and more she enmeshed him in the web of her magnetic personality, drugging his mind while she stirred his senses.

It was a familiar spell. He had times of struggling against it, feeling subconsciously, for all its intoxication, a lack of perfection in it. It was not for this he had come to the mountain tops. He had wanted to think—to reshape his business — Already several weeks had gone by without a moment alone, without an hour of that peace and solitude for which he had planned.

He determined to escape once, and managed to elude the crowd as they were starting in two motor-boats for a distant island. Each party thought he was with the other, and from his retreat part way up the mountainside back of the Lodge, he watched them go, then settled down to his afternoon of thought.

But he found himself unable to concentrate. When he thought of his business, the image of Marcia kept rising before his eyes. And somehow, as he sat in the coolness of the deep woods, he could see her only as she must look after her day of toil in the sweltering city,—white, with violet rings under her clear eyes.

The picture made him unhappy, and the thought which had been with him on his arrival returned

again, pricking through the coat of satisfaction which Genevieve had given him. If he stayed up here, Marcia would be lost to him forever. Already she was less a person than an imagined figure.

There was another thought, too, that he found disturbing. Here he was, spending days and weeks in futile pleasures, in cool comfort and idle security,—while down in New York there were hundreds and thousands of Hungry-Hearted People needing vacations, needing comforts to make life endurable, which he took as naturally as sleep. People who needed ice—or medicine—or a few days at the shore—— Why wasn't he down there finding them? Wasn't that part of his business?

He rose restlessly, refusing to answer these questions. An honest answer meant leaving here, leaving behind these days of fun and ease, leaving Genevieve——

When she came home, she found him irritable. Nothing had been settled. The afternoon was wasted. He had foregone a half day of pleasure and had gained nothing by it. She checked her reproaches as she felt his mood and questioned him tactfully instead.

"We missed you. Did something come up regarding your business that you had to attend to?"

At that he burst out with his difficulties, heaping abuse upon himself, pouring into her ears all his self-recriminations, unconsciously seeking for the comfort she could give him, not realizing that he hoped she would refute him, would restore him to his comfortable state of mind and quiet his conscience.

But that was exactly what happened. She listened in pretended bewilderment as he talked, then burst out laughing.

What a dear old silly he was! Worrying over other people so! Why, of *course*, it was all right for him to stay up here. He couldn't "move millions" even if he did go down! One had to pick and choose where one would help. He had done that. Half a dozen people were made happier before he thought of himself. He had come up here a wreck—not looking like himself at all—she hadn't said anything because she hadn't wanted to bother him—and now he was just beginning to get back his old pep, his old spirits——No, she wouldn't *let* him go. She was going to be selfish, and use all the arguments she could think of to keep him here—for his sake.

Then, shyly, hesitantly, but with diabolical adroitness, she led the conversation back to herself. Hadn't it occurred to him that there were people nearer than New York he could make happy? Would it be polite to his host to leave just when the crowd had learned to swing together—and everyone was paired off so nicely? With gentle reproof, she said:

"You've been so earnest and intent on charity work, you've been inclined to lose sight of your obligations to other people—the amenities of this life, which is *yours*, Don, in spite of yourself. And besides"—she dropped her eyes, the color creeping to her cheeks—"besides," she ended in her low, thrilling voice, "you'd spoil *my* dream if you went. I haven't told you, Don, but I expect to get to work in the fall

Mother and I have come to the end of our resources, and now it's up to me." She straightened bravely. "It'll be all right, only—this is my last vacation, my last fling. Without you ——" she shrugged. "Well, —you wouldn't believe me if I told you the difference it would make."

Donald forgot his own difficulties in the presentation of hers, and Genevieve, seeing this instantly, needed advice and reassurance. He wouldn't forget her—after she was a working girl? He'd come to see her—even though she didn't have a nice place—or pretty clothes? Shivering in repugnance, she murmured:

"Work! I can't bear to think of it. Make me forget, Don, the little time that's left to play."

An appeal for help or comfort reached Donald in his weakest place. Genevieve was an old friend. He couldn't desert her in an hour of need, for strangers, and wasn't she, after all, right—in a way? Didn't he owe something to his host—and to himself? He was, indeed, a part of this life. So long as he was, he would have to regard the demands of the people with whom he was associated in it. He would be able to make up for these days when he got back to New York.

After that, if Donald was conscience stricken, he stifled it himself. No need to bother Genevieve. So long as he stayed here, he'd consider her first. And the girl, suspecting his moments of remorse, constantly steered the conversation into the endless and fascinating discussion of their personalities, playing

lightly first upon one string of his nature then on another, with the skilled touch of a finished artist.

There came a time when she teased him beyond endurance. Her advances and retreats had driven him past all patience, and when, still mocking and refusing him after a long day, she finally went with him out of the moonlight into the forest along the shore, he followed with a gleam of determination in his eyes.

They were in the summer-house again. All about them was a vast stillness, a quiet that should have soothed troubled emotions, but Donald felt none of it. He looked instead at the girl near him, at her lovely, laughing face and her warm, red lips so close to his and he stepped nearer, breathing quickly.

"Now!" he said in a low voice. "I shall punish you."

"It can't be done!"

"Why not?"

"Because punishment—from you—is pleasure indeed!"

He made a threatening motion toward her and she flung up a hand.

"Ah, but you must tell me first, why I am being punished."

"Because you've provoked me all day. You haven't played fair. You were to go riding with me this morning—and you wouldn't. You were to play tennis with me this afternoon—and you didn't. You were to come out with me to-night after dinner—and you 'forgot,' and began a game of bridge."

"Well, I'm here now."

"Because I made you come. That's the only reason. Because I killed three or four men and dragged you over their dead bodies. What's the matter? Didn't you want to?"

Genevieve had not moved an inch, though Donald stood so close that her body touched his. She gave a low laugh and answered lightly:

"Want to? Yes, I wanted to. But ——"

"But what?"

She shook her head.

"I'll never tell you!"

"Oh, yes you will."

He reached for her suddenly but she left her cape in his hands and slipped away, running lightly down the path toward the house, her laugh sounding maddeningly in his ears.

He caught her in the dark shadows of the woods just at their edge. Breathing deeply, he held her in the circle of his arms, and, panting and breathless, she leaned a little against him. He spoke excitedly—at random.

"You *will* run away."

She nodded, defiant still.

"Why? You'll have to tell me now."

"Because"—she tipped back her head and gave her musical full-throated laugh—"because—I'm afraid of you in the moonlight!"

She had made a try for her old bantering way, but the little tremble in her voice betrayed her. Donald's arms tightened, and bending, he kissed her fully on the mouth.

"You'd better be," he muttered.

They went back to the summer house, to a few more hours of delirious delight in which nothing was asked and nothing promised but everything seemed to be understood, and there was only one answer to the question beating at the back of Donald's mind.

Wasn't the lightness of love a part of life also, as well as fun and fellowship? It was. It was a part of *this* life, anyway.

But he spent a night of doubt and perplexity. His conscience, awake again, gave him many qualms, and he swung from remorse to the pleasure of remembered excitement, from shame to rebellion against that very shame.

It came to him finally that though Genevieve had laid to rest one mental disturbance, she had also provoked another. Though she had rehabilitated him temporarily in his own self-respect and had effectually lulled to sleep his secret misgivings about his business, she had stirred him to questionings along another line.

For she had shown him what a companion she could be. She had made him realize that this life he was living now was his, after all. The one to which he was accustomed, the one which gave him the most pleasure. These people about him were his people. Genevieve, herself, was the kind of girl he was used to, the kind he liked and admired —

Did he love her? He believed he did. But why hadn't he, then, told her so? What had restrained him each time at the moment of speaking the things

that burned on his tongue? Marcia? But she was gone. She had taken herself away, deliberately and finally. He knew that at last. Now that she was gone, was he never to think of another girl? Never to marry?

If he married Genevieve, he could keep on with his work. She wasn't as fully sympathetic, quite as eagerly interested as Marcia had been. She wouldn't actively *help* him—as Marcia would have—but neither would she stop him. And she would give him other things that Marcia couldn't. With Genevieve, the old familiar life of gaiety and ease and comfort could go on.

The next day Genevieve was cool and collected and very keenly alive to Donald's distress of mind and manner. He had asked her to paddle with him into the sunset, but when he got her into the canoe, he was abstracted and abrupt. With a frown between his brows he paddled steadily across the tinted water, as though his life depended on getting somewhere and then, when the red ball dropped into the lake in the distance, he turned the boat and pushed just as hard to reach home before darkness fell.

Genevieve spoke at last.

"Don, what is the matter?"

Donald looked at her, and away over the darkening lake.

"I'm all in a stew," he answered. "I'm all in a muddle."

"You? Why, I can't believe it. I thought you always were serene and sure of yourself."

There was a little moment of silence broken by Genevieve's low, thrilling voice.

"Can't you tell me, Don dear? Can't I help you?"

To the man, she had never appeared lovelier, never seemed sweeter or gentler. He drew a great breath and putting down his paddle he bent forward toward her. At that moment a shout came to them from the near-by shore and a dinner bell sent its echoes ringing from side to side of the lake. They paid no attention. Donald was suddenly tense and vibrant, Genevieve very still. An eager light leaped to his face, and under his look the girl's glance fluttered and fell.

"I haven't been sure of myself—for months, Gen. But I am now, all of a sudden. I think I know—what I want."

"And—can you get it, Don?" She barely whispered it.

"That's what I want to find out—as soon as possible, Gen."

CHAPTER XIV

OUT OF THE CLOUDS

BUT the opportunity to "find out soon" did not come that night, for there was a terrific thunderstorm which raged all the evening and left the world outside a ruin of fallen trees and uprooted bushes dripping with wet. Genevieve and Donald were shut into the one big living-room with all the other young people, both of them striving to hide their impatience from the eyes of others.

The next day dawned clear and hot, but it was still impossible for Donald to get a word alone with Genevieve. All the forest retreats were cut off by the broken limbs that strewed the paths, and the dense underbrush, wet and impenetrable, made walking out of the question. With the small boats limited in number and roads too muddy to consider horseback riding, there was no place left but the porch and—perhaps later—the tennis court.

Donald, though not fully aware of it, was somewhat relieved at this unexpected postponement of his declaration. The longer he was alone, the more unsure he became that he wanted to commit himself to Genevieve, though he had not yet reached the point where he would face this fact honestly. He dodged it, instead. And when the blazing rays of the sun dried the

tennis court sufficiently so that it could be played on in the afternoon, he enthusiastically engineered a tennis tournament, ignoring Genevieve's suggestion that they go out in a canoe instead.

"I'd rather wait until to-night," he whispered hurriedly.

Genevieve, however, was disturbed and annoyed, and took it out in playing a straight, hard game which enabled her, after seven strenuous sets, to walk off with two first prizes—ladies singles and mixed doubles. But as every triumph is won at some cost, Genevieve found the price she had to pay for covering herself in Donald's eyes with glory that afternoon was a terrific headache which made her so ill she was unable to come down for dinner.

She lay dizzy and sick on her bed, furious with herself and the world, aware of something in Donald's attitude of which she had need to be afraid, and raging against the luck that was holding him from her. The psychological moment had been reached. It must not pass.

Her own anxiety, added to her pain, gave her a sleepless night. The next morning her glass showed her the ravages that had been made in her appearance. She was haggard. She debated between the wisdom of staying hidden all day to reappear in the soft lamplight, restored to her old beauty and vivacity, and the folly of leaving Donald alone for any more hours.

But the matter was settled for her. When one of the other girls came in with inquiries about Genevieve's headache, and she learned that Mac was planning for

an all-day picnic, and that Donald was enthusiastically seconding the motion, Genevieve flung herself back on her bed, waving this bearer of ill tidings away. She was unequal to an all-day affair, and fearful also of trying to hold Donald here with her in her present state of frayed nerves and exhaustion. She might lose all she had gained. Better to rest quietly in bed and emerge to-night.

Her continued ill luck, however, did not improve her temper, and she gave way to it in petulance and fury when the little maid tiptoed in later in the morning to see if she could be of service to Ma'amselle Powers. Genevieve sat upright, two bright spots of color on her cheeks, her voice shrill and ugly.

"You stupid creature! Why didn't you knock?"

The French maid hesitated half-way through the doorway, apologetic and polite.

"I am vair sorry, Ma'amselle. I was theenking you might be asleep, and I should peep before I spoke ——"

"You woke me, anyway! Now get out! No! wait! I want some coffee. Make it hot and black. No sugar. And be quick."

Marie closed the door and tiptoed away. While Donald, who had impulsively stayed home from the picnic at the last moment, smitten with self-reproach at leaving Genevieve alone all day, stood stockstill in the living-room below. Then very silently he, too, tiptoed away.

He went off in the forest, climbing higher and higher up a faint trail until he was all alone in the green solitude. There was nothing in sight but the

trees and the birds. No sound save the little stirrings of animal folk. He flung himself flat on green moss and lay motionless for hours.

It was peaceful here. Cool and quiet. Why had he never come here before? Funny, when he had meant to. Well, there hadn't been time. But he'd make time after this.

He watched a little chipmunk scurry in fright up a tree. Reaching a branch it sat there, scolding shrilly. Genevieve had scolded shrilly too. He wouldn't have believed it was her voice if he hadn't known she was the only one left in the house. It had been a shock to him. Was there other undiscovered ugliness beneath that lovely exterior?

He didn't know—and he didn't care to find out. In some surprise he realized that he wanted to get away from Genevieve. He wanted to get away and keep away. It must have been that distrust of her which had each time checked his mad desire to make love to her. He was thankful the affair had gone no further. You couldn't be sure of a girl like that, and he wouldn't ever marry a girl he couldn't be sure of.

At this point of his thinking Donald sat up slowly, staring unseeingly into the thick green curtain of leaves before him.

He had said to himself about Genevieve exactly what Marcia had said to him about himself!

"I'm not sure of you. Donald—there are two of you—*Which is the real you?*"

The words had seared into his mind, though he had covered over the burned place. Now they had come

back again, a challenge which he had to face, a blaze of light in which he saw himself clearly for the first time.

There were, indeed, two of him. He was a person with two conflicting desires, two opposed standards of living, two different pleasures in life. And with this realization he had to acknowledge that he lacked to Marcia what Genevieve lacked to him. He understood now why she had left him so abruptly, and so finally. In just the same way he would have to leave Genevieve. He would have to choose between the reality of Genevieve and the memory of Marcia, between his work and his play, between his dream of service and his love of life.

He sprang to his feet—and paused irresolutely. His instinct was to fly at once—away from Genevieve—but he wanted also to know why he was doing this. He must make no mistake this time, for his decision would be irrevocable. If he left Genevieve it would be forever; could he do it? He'd better think it out—slowly—carefully. Here was a good place. Now was a good chance. It was for just such deliberate thinking he had come to the Adirondacks—and this was the first time he had done it. He sat down again, and remained so still that the frightened hush of animal life which his sudden movement had made, changed gradually into the accustomed stir of activity. There were rustlings and snappings. There was a twittering and chattering. But Donald was unaware of it all and followed in tense silence the twisted course of his own thoughts.

Genevieve could thrill him. She could please and bewitch him—while he was with her. But she left him with a burning sense of dissatisfaction, a leaping fever of impatience in his veins. Marcia had never done that with him. Each time he had come away from Marcia it had been with a deeper sense of satisfaction, with that still singing peace in his heart. When he had gone back to Genevieve, it had been with the barely curbed eagerness of unsatiated passion, while going back to Marcia had been like a return to drink again from the clear, sweet pool of love.

Marcia! She came back to him now, clearly. Marcia with her courage and determination. Marcia, with her sweetness which had survived all manner of hardships. Marcia, quietly and modestly going about her business, however unrecognized an affair it was.

Where was she now? With millions of others, toiling in the hot city, he supposed, while he—and Genevieve—had been living in cool, idle security. Genevieve, sumptuous, lazy,—would she ever really work? He doubted it, as he now doubted many things about her. He could see her, pouting and shivering in repugnance.

“Work! Make me forget I have to, Don.”

Would Marcia ever want to forget if there was something she had to do? Would Marcia ever let *him* forget there was work he ought to be busy about?

These were distressing questions, but Donald would not shirk them this time. He sat immovable, his hands clenched together about his knees, his eyes looking steadily at what his honesty now compelled him to

face, and quietly, easily, he made his decision and his choice.

He had known a girl of strength and beauty and loveliness, but he had not been worthy of her, so he had lost her. He had known another, whose strength made him weak, whose beauty was deceiving, whose loveliness was all for self. He could have her, but he didn't want her. He wanted Marcia. Not being able to have Marcia, he wanted, then, to live life as she would have approved, to make himself worthy of her, even though he never saw her again. He would keep her memory shining and bright hereafter, because she was his ideal. She held him up to his best. He had been weak and blind, but he need no longer be weak and blind. If he could not resist Genevieve, then he would leave her before she could twist him from his decision.

He would leave her and go back to the city,—back to Jane—and his clients —— He'd find more clients, make his Dream Business a bigger, more absorbing piece of work. Without Marcia—and without Genevieve—he would have to do this. But how?

Thinking about it he came to see that Marcia had been right. His "Business," as it now was organized, was not "enough." It did not "use him up, mind and soul and body ——"

It was not, he realized sharply, a real "business." It had no depth, dignity or meaning. It was not in fact, as he had liked to believe, a man's size job. Could it really even be called *work* when all he did was make out cheques? After all, Jane had found him his

clients; Jane had been the one to interview them; Jane had done all the actual work—if it could ever be dignified by that word—and he had taken the credit.

Then it came to him quite clearly why he had been discontented with the business after all. It was because he hadn't had the thing in his hands. He hadn't felt the throb and pulse of people, in their sorrow or in their joy, as he had expected. Jane had.

Was there another reason? Donald, peering into the twilight, was looking not at the forest about him but into undiscovered regions of his own soul. In the dim, still moment his last conceit fell away as he saw himself completely stripped in his own eyes of his manhood.

His "work"—his "dream"—he saw it now as a child's toy. There was decidedly something the matter with that too, as there had been with him. It was not as big and purposeful as he had expected.

With brows bent in deep thought Donald sat motionless for almost an hour. Slowly out of the chaos which Genevieve had wrought in his mind came a few clear ideas.

He still believed in the basic idea of his dream. "Service"—that was right. "An equalization of opportunities"—that was right too. "A custodian of wealth." Yes, he was right. Gradually a faint perception of what he might be doing took shape in his mind. He saw himself hunting for hungry-hearted people. He saw himself "serving" with heart and mind and body, as well as with his grandfather's money. He saw himself extending opportunities for

education and health to people who needed these things more than Sue needed dancing lessons.

Donald rose and stood upright, his shoulders straightening as though he were flinging from them the load of his immaturity. He hadn't begun to sound the depth of his dream! He hadn't even touched it yet! He'd been all this time skirting around the edges of it!

No one saw the light of battle coming again to his eyes. No one saw his jaw set and stiffen with the determination of a new decision. And no one heard his low resolve:

"I'll put it over—something real and big."

Then he strode down from the mountain tops, "out of the clouds" at last.

He went quietly into the house, packed his suitcase and his trunk, left a note for Mac, explaining that business called him back to the city, another for Genevieve, and then went out to find the secretive manservant who would drive him to the train.

As the sound of wheels reached through her window, Genevieve sat up in bed, puzzled, a little anxious. Then she sprang to look out. She saw the wagon disappearing into the woods, Donald's big figure seated beside the diminutive one of the Scotchman.

Slipping on a kimono she went hastily down-stairs. There was no sound. No one was about. She looked into Donald's room and found his trunk was gone. Coming back into the living-room she spied the two notes on the stone mantelpiece over the fireplace, and she snatched at hers.

"DEAR GENEVIEVE:

"I've gotten my perspective at last, and I'm going back to New York to see if I can find there what I want. I believe I can.

"If I can do anything for you in the fall, when you are ready to begin work, please let me know. In the meantime, accept my thanks for the many ways in which you have helped to make my vacation so pleasant.

"Always your friend,
"DONALD."

"Always your friend!"

Genevieve crushed the note in her hand and stood, breathing quickly, shaking a little with suppressed emotion, one slippered foot tapping the floor.

Then an idea occurred to her that made her lift her head. Her face cleared. She spread out the crumpled paper and read it again. Then, with a nod of decision, she turned and went slowly up the stairs again to her room.

CHAPTER XV

BEGGARS FALL OFF

ON a hot night in early August Jane opened her door to Henry Gray.

"Good-evening, Jane," he said affably.

To his surprise Jane impulsively put out both hands and drew him into the room with a little gasp.

"Oh, Henry!"

"You seem almost glad to see me."

"Anyone, Henry, is better this evening than the company of my own thoughts," she told him, the severity of her voice spoiled by the relief in her face as her eyes dwelt on him.

To which Henry replied nothing. But he settled into the comfort of the big chair by the window with a gentle sigh of relief. For coming to see Jane had been difficult business at best since his hasty return from Europe. After pouring out his explanation and apology Henry had waited in the hope that Jane would ask him how he had spent the money "another way." He wanted to unload his conscience entirely, free himself completely from the feeling of guilt. Because in his quiet moments alone he had felt rather foolish about it all,—as though he had done a childish and an unwise thing. He longed to be upheld in misdemeanor. He ached for Jane's approval.

But Jane, waiting in silence for Henry to make his

confidence, had, with difficulty, restrained herself from curious questioning. It was his place to tell, not hers to ask. She hadn't failed him in sympathy so far. Let him go on. He would, of course, complete the confession. He would—but as she hesitated to ask, so did he hesitate to tell, and the moment passed. Then Jane, in a little hurt and pique, resolved never to ask him. If he couldn't trust her — If he didn't want to—oh, very well.

So the whole subject had been abruptly dropped but with that unexplained mystery between them, an old relationship had been slightly strained. Though Henry came faithfully, and Jane received him hopefully, the visits were conducted with decorum and extreme politeness, the conversation skirting about personalities and skipping away from danger points and finally leaving each one feeling cheated. Why couldn't Jane by a hint or reference open the way for his revelation? Why wouldn't Henry frankly and fearlessly clear up this matter that loomed so large on the horizon when they were together?

To-night, however, things were starting off a little better. Jane's warm greeting put Henry at his ease as he hadn't been for weeks and he looked across at Jane in her chair with a familiar sense of expanding pleasure and happiness in her presence. He was bursting to talk to her, and at the same time almost afraid to speak, lest she rebuff him and the charm of the moment be broken. So he smoked in a silence that Jane finally interrupted.

"I've half a mind to tell you, Henry."

There was trouble in her voice and Henry looked at her in surprise. It was seldom Jane was troubled, almost never that she showed it.

"My dear," he said quickly, "is something the matter?"

Jane laughed shortly.

"Something? Everything." She stopped and bit her lip. Henry regarded her thoughtfully.

"Book turned down?"

"Oh, it isn't even finished."

"Reached a sticking point in your story?"

"It hasn't anything to do with my book or with me."

After a moment of waiting Henry suggested mildly, that troubles were sometimes bettered by being aired. Just talking about things made them seem less trying. He knew, because he had something on his own mind that he wanted to talk about for a long time — (It was a relief to be started at last. He'd make a clean breast of it now.)

"What stopped you, Henry?"

"You."

"I! Why, you never started! How could I stop you before you started?"

"Well, you did. That's just what you did. But you can't stop me now. If you'll listen —"

Jane smiled.

"You know I've been dying to hear."

"Really? I thought you were too disgusted with me to be interested in hearing more."

Jane shook her head at him.

"Henry, Henry. I wish you could take a course somewhere in the Psychology of Feminine Friends. You don't know *anything*."

"But what little I learn I remember. Now I'll remember always after this that when a woman pretends she doesn't want to listen, she's dying to be told."

"Exactly. And now do begin."

"Do we make an even exchange of confidences?"

Jane nodded, and Henry began.

"Well ——"

At that moment they both heard steps on the stairs. There was a familiar sound to them that lifted Jane to her feet, puzzlement, surprise, and pleasure chasing rapidly across her face.

"Donald!" she said in a low voice to Henry, who rose at once.

"My cue to exit."

"Don't go," Jane spoke in a sharp whisper. "My worries are all about him—and his Dream Business. You wanted to hear—now stay. I can't go through with it alone." And as Henry tried to pass her, she caught his arm. "*Stand by the ship*, I tell you!"

"Jane, please remember I never got on the ship! Have a heart!"

But Jane had opened the door and Donald was upon them.

A different Donald, Jane's keen intuitions told her at once. Wasn't there a new gravity here? Yet not so different after all, she thought the next moment. For his fierce repression was familiar,—and that im-

patient fling of his head,—and that effect of being consumed by something —

He greeted Henry without any apparent remembrance of his treachery. Grateful for the oversight, Henry slid into an inconspicuous corner and remained there, finding it amusing and somewhat pathetic to hear Jane trying to chatter. Jane chatter! When she usually shot her thoughts as a huntsman shoots his bullets!

Finally Jane gave it up. Donald wasn't half listening. He *was* different. Her quick glance searched his face before she bent forward, forgetful of the man in the shadows, and spoke in a voice as gentle as she could make it:

"Something on your mind, Donald?"

"I'll say so," he answered briefly.

"Mine too," she returned flippantly. "Let's match to see who unloads first. Heads I do, tails you do."

Gravely Donald flipped a coin.

"Heads. Shoot!" He leaned back and folded his arms.

Jane was thankful. Because if there were something real disturbing the Son of her Dreams, it would be well-nigh impossible for her, after hearing of it, to make matters worse for him by revealing her story. She'd get through with hers first, and in all likelihood, by comparison, his own difficulty would fade into insignificance. So, without a glance at him, she pushed the hard fact in all its shameless nakedness before him and then turned on him her alert eyes, softened by pity, to see how he was taking it.

"All your beggars have fallen off their horses, Donald."

Startled, he looked at her quickly.

"What do you mean?"

"They didn't know how to ride. And it wasn't as much fun as they expected, so ——" She shrugged and smiled and her glance begged Donald to understand without further words.

But he knit his brows.

"I don't get you at all. Please explain."

There was a little silence, then Jane reached for Donald's hand, pressed it a moment between her own and said softly:

"This will hurt, Donald. I hate to tell you. But, of course, I must."

"Of course." His tone was matter of fact.

Releasing him she drew back from the full glow of the lamp and told her story slowly, picking her words as one who is crossing a dangerous stream picks his steps.

"Your clients don't—seem to have—fully understood our proposition. They have, in many cases—in most cases—abused their privileges."

"For instance ——" Donald suggested quietly.

"Take Miss Thorne. She spent a great deal of time choosing the site for her Tea Room. She wanted to serve the Columbia students. I thought it an excellent idea. But instead of renting a place in the heart of that district where the boys and girls flock past in hundreds, she chose a basement on a side street, several blocks out of the way."

"Why?"

"Because it would lend itself to her plan of interior decorating. She had settled on a name—'The Old Dutch Mill.' This place she found had an old door for an entrance, with an iron latch that pleased her fancy. She took it, and then had to spend hundreds of dollars equipping it. There was no heat, very little light, and no water or cooking facilities down there. She had the whole place overhauled, remodelled and fitted up."

"That sounds like good business sense. She had to do that much, of course."

"But there was another place in a better location—all ready for her to step into. It had been used as a Tea Room before. I—really, Donald,—I was very much provoked with her. It seemed a waste of money which I knew she would need for advertising purposes and the first few months' expenses. I was so cross when I found I couldn't change her mind that I let her quite alone."

Jane paused. Donald prodded her.

"Well?"

"When I finally went back, her 'Dutch Mill' was a perfectly delightful place. Blue and yellow painted furniture, you know. A frieze of painted scenes about the yellow walls—windmills predominating. Charming cretonne curtains,—yellow and blue also, with a touch of black,—flower boxes of tulips, little black salts and peppers on top of each blue table-top—oh, it was most attractive!"

"Well, wasn't she getting the trade?"

"Well—to some extent. More than I anticipated."

"Then what's the matter?"

"She serves a delicious meal for a ridiculous price, Donald. It's like giving food away. Nobody else does it, because it can't be done these days. And all home cooking, of course,—she does it herself—with the best ingredients in everything. Cream, butter and sugar—lavishly used ——"

"I don't see ——"

"My dear boy, she's losing money every day. Did I tell you about her waitresses? They had to be pretty—with long flaxen hair. Lacking the long flaxen hair—and of course they're all bobbed—they had to wear wigs. They each have thick braids over their shoulder, and blue and white Dutch costumes to go with the braids. They had to be polite as well as pretty and willing to fall in with her scheme. Manners and a co-operative spirit come high. Those waitresses will be able to retire long before you or I will, Donald."

She waited to see if he understood but he showed no comprehension, so she ended briskly.

"Her overhead, Donald, is terrific. Her expenses far outweigh her income. They always will so long as she continues as she is now, and she won't change."

"But can't she be persuaded? Can't you make her see ——?"

"Try it if you want to," grimly. "I did. She flew into a temper. She 'hadn't been brought up to do any other kind of cooking'—or 'have anything but nice things about her'—she 'had a nice trade started and couldn't increase it if she raised her prices. And

if you'd 'just lend her a little more money she'd come out on top pretty soon ——' ”

“ I see. It's all gone, then? ”

“ Oh, my, yes. ”

“ Does she keep books? ”

Jane laughed.

“ An expensive secretary does. Miss Thorne hasn't time, you see. Figures annoy her anyway. I tried to show her, but she won't look. I took it upon myself, Donald, to refuse flatly any further help. It's simply throwing money away. Unless she cuts down expenses she can't possibly make ends meet, even. And she'll never change her methods because she's a very stubborn, very impractical—lady. She'll go bust, Donald, and then she'll go to her relatives. ”

Donald leaned back in his chair.

“ I'm sorry to hear that, ” he said quietly at last. And there came a little moment of silence which made Jane fidgety. She spoke quickly.

“ Yes. It was a surprise to me. She seemed so modest and unassuming, so hesitant and bewildered. I didn't dream she had such large and extravagant ideas. But—one never knows. ”

“ No, ” Donald said meditatively, then brightening, he turned to Jane. “ But after all she's only one. How about the others? ”

Jane shook her head, and went on with her story, a little wry smile twisting the corner of her mouth. As she talked she watched Donald closely, wondering how long his glance would remain steady, and his manner calm.

"Mrs. Norton took four singing lessons, but found it quite different from her expectations. Exercises—scales, you know,—are stupid. She wanted songs, at once. Her teacher knows his job and refused, so she and her husband decided that as she wasn't getting what she wanted, it would be foolish to keep on. She can buy her own songs and warble to her heart's content by her fireside. She 'never planned to do anything with her music, anyway' and—'they *did* take a lot of time'—so ——"

"She returned the money," Donald concluded for her.

"Oh, no. She"—a glance at Henry who shrank in his corner—"she spent it another way. She decided she'd rather buy a rug for her living-room. It was 'something both she and her husband could enjoy,' and she 'didn't feel half so selfish.' She hoped you'd understand."

"I'm beginning to." Donald took out his cigarettes. "Now do go on. Or have you reached an end?"

Jane detected the hurt beneath his controlled voice, and as she spoke of John Everett who had so miserably failed his trust, she released her anger for the two of them.

"John Everett! He *knew* what it meant to write a book. He'd been all through the mill. He 'remembered' all right. Oh, yes! But he 'liked work.' He 'wanted to work.' Do you know what he's done with the five thousand dollars you gave him to live on while he was writing?"

Donald shook his head.

"Dropped it in Wall Street."

For a moment there was no sound. Then the boy before her laid his cigarette carefully into the little plate for it. His cool tone had a little edge on it this time.

"Took a flier in the market, eh? And lost."

"Everything. Of course he thought he'd make four or five times what he put in. He was going to pay you back and ——"

Donald interrupted.

"Oh, yes, I know. And now he wants another loan?"

"He hasn't said so."

"Is it because he hasn't the nerve—or doesn't he really want to write?"

"I think it's both, Donald dear. But I think it's more—the latter. People don't always want things as much as they think they do. Take Suzanne ——"

"Suzanne, too! What has she done?"

Jane reached the climax of her tragic tale in one quick leap.

"Married."

"Married!"

"Married," Jane repeated. "She had paid for all her course,—she really was doing splendidly—when along comes a boy from home."

Donald gave a short laugh.

"Well"—he said slowly—"everything seems to be happening at once." He laughed again, that short, hard laugh that made Jane wince. "It looks as though

Grandfather was right. And I was wrong. A fool!" he ended with sudden intensity. "That's what I've been! A fool!"

And with the contrariness of women Jane rushed to his defence.

"No, you haven't. They've been the ones ——"

But he turned on her, lashing himself unsparingly in his self-contempt, all the anger and hurt and humiliation of the last forty-eight hours poured out in a few vivid words.

"Don't blame them! It's my fault! You know it! The whole thing was crazy from the start. Me—riding around like a little tin god on wheels—scattering pennies—thinking I was doing something ——"

"But you were ——"

"I wasn't! There's been something the matter with the whole show from the start. It's taken me a long time to find it out but I know it now!"

"Just what is the matter?" Jane asked quietly.

"No business is any good unless the man at the head of it works with it! And for it!" He glared at Jane a moment, then got up and strode across the room.

"What are you going to do?"

"Get on my job," he answered briefly, slinging his overcoat over his arm and reaching for his hat.

But Jane barred his passage.

"Donald! I have a right to know. Are you giving up your idea? Are you going to drop the whole crazy affair?"

Donald paused in his stampede to the door, and his

answer rang through the room, stirring the woman before him and the quiet man in the shadows as no other moment of the evening had.

"Give it up? No! Drop it? Not by a long shot! I haven't begun!"

"Donald, dear boy." Jane lifted her hands to his shoulders. "Your words sound very brave. But what do they mean? It's only fair to tell me, isn't it?"

In quick repentance Donald threw his hat and coat to a chair and covered Jane's hands with his, drawing them down into his tight, warm clasp.

"I do beg your pardon. Of course I ought to explain."

A new thoughtfulness crept into his eyes and an unfamiliar note of force rang in his quiet tones.

"I'm going down into the slums of the city, Jane, to find really hungry-hearted people. People who haven't *anything*, you know. And when I find 'em—and what it is they want—we'll all work together to get it. I don't know what it'll be—a school or hospital or decent eating places—I haven't the faintest idea. But I'm going slowly 'til I'm sure I'm right." He gave her hands a swift pressure. "I don't know whether Granddad will give me any more money after the rest of this is gone or not. If he doesn't"—his jaw stiffened—"I'll get along without him, that's all."

Then suddenly he put an arm around Jane and kissed her.

"Thank you for the help you've been. You've stood by me like a brick."

Jane held his face to hers a moment.

"I'm going to stand by you some more, Donald. Promise you'll come back and tell me how things are going."

He nodded.

"I'm proud of you, Donald," she added swiftly, in a low voice.

"I've done nothing to be proud of, Jane, but—it makes things less hard to know you feel that way."

And then he was gone. Forgetful of Henry, Jane was left staring at the door, with a hand on her cheek. How long she would have stood there is questionable, but at length Henry disentangled himself from the shadows, found his hat, and with it in his hand came forward. Holding out his hand, he asked her curiously what she had to say about it all.

Jane turned to him slowly and put her hand in his outstretched one.

"Simply—thank goodness."

"That's the last thing I expected you to say."

She gave an unsteady laugh.

"Oh, don't you see? It takes a long time to make a man out of some men—but Donald's getting there. And when he finds life, he'll do something real with it, I think. Don't you?" She lifted her face, her usual cool composure gone, and as Henry looked in amazement at her sweet eyes and tremulous mouth, sudden emotion stirred him.

"I can't think at all, Jane, with you so close. Do you know I've held your hand for five minutes?"

"It doesn't matter. Answer me. Weren't you proud of Donald?"

"Yes." Looking down at her, he comprehended in one swift moment Jane's exact feeling for Donald, and he was glad he could say with sincerity what he felt. "Yes. He was fine. It was a rotten deal but he took it like a man." Giving her hand a gentle pressure he added daringly—"We're going to be very proud of our boy some day, Jane,—you and I."

Jane's eyes flashed surprise and she drew away but her answer came readily enough.

"I think so, too." Then, seeing his hat she took it from him. "But you mustn't think of going, Henry. I want you to stay and talk some more."

"About Donald?" slyly.

"About anything—so you stay. I'm going to miss him, you know. You'll have to take his place for a while."

Henry came close to her again.

"I have my uses, after all, haven't I, Jane?" he asked quizzically.

"You're an old dear," she answered quickly. "An understanding old dear. I thought of you, sitting back there in your corner so quietly, and I couldn't help but wonder what you were thinking all the time."

"Do you want me to tell you?"

"Yes."

"I was thinking how interesting—and encouraging—it was to discover that you can be very gentle—and very loving."

Jane moved away. She hadn't meant to draw just that.

"Oh, didn't you know that before?" Glancing back over her shoulder as she went toward the kitchenette, she added teasingly, "You're slow, Henry."

Henry did not go toward her, but something in his voice and his steady glance made her glad there was so much space between them.

"Slow but sure. Don't forget that, Jane. I'm slow but sure."

CHAPTER XVI

A PRINCE AMONG PAUPERS

"BEG pardon, sir."

Old Dobson, standing before Donald, tried by the gentleness of his voice to soften the curt message from the elder Mr. McIntyre.

"BEG pardon, sir. I'm sorry, sir, but Mr. McIntyre sends word that he—er—has nothing whatever to say to you, sir, until next March."

Donald paused in his impatient walk up and down his room while Dobson eyed him anxiously. Suddenly Donald laughed—that new, hard laugh of his. So his grandfather refused to see him! Refused to speak with him until next March, when he would probably disown him! Well, that was one pleasure the old man shouldn't have. He'd pack out of here—now—at once. And he would not come back until he was asked! Bit by bit the march of events was forcing him to abandon his old way of living, and by now Donald was ready to go. He had dreaded this interview with his grandfather, which his sense of fairness compelled him to seek. Now he'd done his share and he was refused. All right. He was through. Through with this life, through with his grandfather, through with everything.

"BEG pardon, sir. Will you be wanting to shave before you go out, sir?"

Donald turned toward the old servant whom he had forgotten, and answered absently: "No, not to-night, thanks, Dobson."

"I was only thinking, sir, you hadn't been able to shave on the train and ——"

Donald walked to the mirror and eyed himself critically.

"Grows fast, doesn't it, Dobson! Makes me look quite—quite—villainous." He remained a moment in deep thought. "No, I'll not be shaved," and then turning suddenly, "By the way, Dobson, do you know anybody who works?"

Dobson stared at his young master. He had never seen him drunk, yet he certainly did talk a bit odd ——

"Why, sir, everybody as I know works, sir."

"I mean dirty work, Dobson. In streets, or factories. People who have grimy clothes. Do you know any?"

Dobson pondered a moment, then his face brightened.

"My nephew, sir. He's night shift in a newspaper plant. He's down in the machinery parts all the time. He gets quite shocking dirty, sir."

"How big is he?"

"He's a big man, sir. About as big as you, I should say."

"Has he begun work to-night, Dobson? It's nine-thirty."

"He'll just be going, sir."

"All right, then, so will I. Get me that blue suit,

Dobson. I'll wear what I have on. Thanks. You think it will fit your nephew all right? Good. Now tell me again where I'll find him."

So, in less than one hour Donald was possessed of a newspaper bundle in which was an assortment of old but respectable work clothes, while the bewildered nephew of Dobson, arrayed in a tailor-made suit, covered with a pair of brand new overalls, stood dazedly counting over a roll of bills in his hand, wondering if wealth made every feller plumb crazy.

Donald had decided what he wanted to do after he got his clothes and without further waste of time he began doing it.

It was just a little before midnight when a dirty, strange looking Donald, his bridges all burned behind him, could be seen making his way down toward the docks where the big ships come in. In his heart a variety of emotions were waging violent warfare, but triumphant among them was the sense of excitement, of keen zest for a new adventure in life, and an exhilarating feeling of freedom. With the discarding of his old life he seemed to have also discarded its prejudices. He stood alone at last, with his convictions. And he would remain alone. He would remain lost to his world until he had proved himself and his theories. No one should know where he was, except Jane.

In some uncertainty he approached the pier watchman who curtly directed him to the boss stevedore on the dock. As he drew near the gang of men busily unloading the cargo from one of the big liners he was

thankful for his old clothes, and more thankful for his unshaven face.

Happening to glance down at his hands he realized with a start of dismay that they would betray his past. That was easily remedied, however, so he furtively passed them over the oily wheel of the truck, against which he was leaning, and rubbed them together behind his back.

The effect was fairly satisfactory, though his nails were still too clean, but he was interrupted from his contemplation of them by a rough voice.

"Say! What do you think this is? A beauty parlor? Wha' d'ye want? A manicure free? Or was yer lookin' fer a *facial massage*?"

Donald looked up at a burly man of indeterminate years but unquestionable size and power. Small, bright eyes gleamed under bushy brows in a very red face nearly covered with a bristly gray stubble. It was a coarse face with a cruel, thick-lipped mouth, but looking from the mouth to the eyes, Donald found a likeable face, giving an impression of personal as well as physical force.

There came a lull among the band of workers who instinctively felt the stir of something unusual in the air. With the lust of primitive men who live by passion and fight, they waited in hungry anticipation for a "mix-up."

"I'm looking for a job." Donald's crisp voice sounded clearly through the night, above the rattle and bang and roar all about him.

The big man thrust his head forward and peered at

Donald, his bright little eyes passing over him in slow amusement, from his trimmed hair, shining pale gold in the light of a lantern overhead, to his hands which still did not have all their whiteness concealed. Then he put both fists on his wide sides and shook with silent laughter, beckoning the men about him with a sweep of his big arm. In a moment Donald was surrounded.

"Look what the tide brought in, boys! Ain't he cute? Wants to work, he says! Well, cutey, let's see yer union card."

"Oh!" Donald had forgotten that. "Can't I get it later?"

The big man contemplated him another moment and then went off into another fit of silent laughter, stopping finally to ask of the men about him, "What do you say, boys?"

"Sure! Give him a try," someone shouted, seeing an hour's idle pleasure ahead at someone else's expense.

"Try is right! You're voted in." Beef Donaghan made an elaborate bow, then he suddenly sobered and going up to Donald, towered over him threateningly.

"I'm boss around these diggin's. Get me? What I sez goes. Now, Dude, let's see ye sling a fist around a hand truck." His manner changed to one of amusement again. "Don't let it roll away wid ye, darlin'."

Donald had been standing all this time cool and collected. Now he grinned up into the Big Beef's face.

"Sure won't," he answered cheerfully, and, as the

Boss turned away, he added carelessly: "How much did you say you paid?"

Beef swung slowly back toward him. "Don't get funny—too soon." But when he saw that Donald was apparently not to be overborne by his most menacing manner, he added meaningly: "I pay *men* five dollars a night. I pay gentlemen what they're worth. 'Tain't much."

A roar of appreciative laughter met this wit, and when it had rumbled away Donald made clear reply.

"If that's a joke I can't laugh 'til I'm sure who the joke's on."

"Well, take it from me, cutey, it ain't on me."

But Donald had walked away toward a truck and in a few moments was busy with the others, catching on his truck the bales of stuff that were rolled down the gangplank, and wheeling them over to a distant corner. It was a feat that required a quick eye and a cool head, and more endurance than strength. He discovered at once that it took some skill to tip the truck up at the right angle, so as to catch the heavy bale as it came thundering down, without either spilling it off or letting the weight of it jerk the handles of the truck from him.

At first, of course, Donald blundered, and his load went rolling away from him toward the water's edge. Ready laughter greeted the mishap as Donald sprang after it, and Beef's voice boomed out:

"Watch yourself, Dude! Freeze onto that bale. Yer ain't playin' marbles!"

Donald just saved it from going into the water by

thrusting out his foot. As he wheeled his truck over to it, hoisted the load on and wheeled it back into place, he kept his eyes intently on the man just ahead of him to learn the knack of it from him.

He was a powerful fellow, with great hairy arms and a mat of thick black hair hanging over bloodshot eyes. A slit nostril and a loose-hanging mouth gave to his heavy face an expression of sinister evil. Donald noticed he was the only one not ready to laugh at the stranger. On the contrary, he seemed to resent his appearance there, and the more successfully Donald managed his load, the blacker grew the man's face.

However, his surroundings and activities were not conducive to deep reflection. Donald found he had time only to revel secretly in the fact that sweat and dirt were fast making him inconspicuous. Another hour and no one would be able to tell him from the "regular guys."

Beef's big voice boomed out again.

"Hey! Lefty! Snap into it! Goneter let the Dude beat an old timer like you?"

The man ahead of Donald dropped his truck and sent a lowering glance to Beef and then another to the boy behind him. Vouchsafing no reply, he spit on his hands and went on his way again.

After that it was gradually borne in on Donald that Lefty was taking a sneaking revenge for the words of Beef. For he ran his truck as close to Donald's as he could, and twice the boy just leaped aside before a heavy wheel passed over his foot. The first time Donald thought it was an accident, but the second time he

became suspicious, and it only needed the muttered voice of one of the men telling another in an aside that the "Dude wasn't wise to Lefty's 'picking on' him" to put Donald on his guard.

By three-thirty he was tired. He could almost hear his muscles creak, but his pride kept him moving. The thrill of having been able to hold his own among these powerful, dirty brothers of his was like nothing he had ever before experienced. It didn't need the offer of a "chaw of terbaccer" to tell him that he was meeting with the approval of his fellows.

While he stood by the man who was cutting him a plug, he saw out of the corner of his eye that Lefty was bearing down on him. Just as he got opposite Donald he lunged and bumped into him so hard that Donald was knocked forward a pace or two.

"Get out o' my way, will yer?" Lefty growled.

Donald whirled, his fists clenched, his eyes blazing. In three short hours he had become another man; a man whose blood ran hot at a slight provocation, and who was well aware that he must live in this new world by war, and not by wits.

"When you keep out of mine, I'll keep out of yours."

This was what Lefty wanted. He had hated Donald on sight because he had the appearance of belonging to a better class than his own, the class which had all the money and power. His resentment had grown with Donald's easy success at his new job. Here was a way to humiliate him, to put him in his place and show him a thing or two. He knew, too, that Donald

was breathing heavily after nearly four hours of unremitting work. With an evil grin he rolled up his sleeves. Donald thrust out his chin and rolled his up too, and one by one the other men gathered around the two.

Dawn was just breaking, and the gray light, falling through lofty glass windows, shone grimly on the two men. Donald had pitched his cap aside, and with a characteristic gesture, flung his fair hair back from his forehead. Dirty as he was, there was a marked difference between him and his opponent, lying in the clear, open countenance of the boy with his straight, blazing eyes of gray. Beef pulled him aside a moment, moved by a sudden generous impulse.

"You're against a tough proposition, Dude."

"So's he," said Donald.

He faced Lefty coolly and quietly, his face set into grim resolute purpose. The ugly mood of the other man had been communicated to him, and though he did not understand it, he knew he would have to use all his wits and strike to some purpose. To the men standing about in a ring the odds were all against the Dude. Big as he was, he was no match for the enormous Lefty whose great arms bulged with iron muscles.

Lefty circled him warily. The men fell silent, while a crippled boy, hunchbacked and with a short right leg swinging lifelessly from his hip, clambered to the top of a pile of boxes, dropping his crutch with a startling clatter.

Suddenly Lefty lunged headlong at Donald. It

seemed in that moment as though the sheer weight of him would bear down and crush the boy, but he stepped easily aside and before a low murmur of surprise from the men, landed a blow behind Lefty's ear which sent him staggering in his stride, crashing against a row of barrels.

With a roar he regained his balance and rushed again, flailing his arms in fury, but Donald, stepping lightly about in the circle, untouched and cool and quick as lightning, jabbed and stabbed at his ugly face with a nice calculation which served to madden Lefty still further, while the onlookers drew in closer in tense excitement. Here was a fight! A real one!

Finally Lefty stepped back and in that moment's respite Donald relaxed his vigilance, becoming, as he did so, suddenly aware of his great fatigue. His knees trembled beneath him, and he could not unfold his clenched hands. Breathing heavily, he stood in silence, trying to recover himself before Lefty rushed again. Sweat poured from his forehead and trickled down in his eyes and he shook his head to clear his vision. In that unguarded second Lefty leaped and clinched and before Donald could save himself he was thrown flat on the floor, the fight turned into a wrestling match. Over and over they rolled, until Donald suddenly felt Lefty's hands at his throat, choking him. Faintness and nausea overwhelmed him, and through a haze he looked up to see Lefty's face with its slit nostril quivering, and its loose mouth pulled back away from ugly teeth in a leering grin.

At that moment a couple of men sprang forward,

dragging Lefty off, and holding him upright at one side of the ring while Beef and one or two others helped Donald to his feet.

"Lefty's one of us, and you ain't, but we'll have fair play," Beef said in a voice that all could hear.

Donald made no answer. But with his eyes on Lefty, he stood waiting for his next move, a cold, quiet, murderous rage filling him, making him oblivious of everything but his desire to revenge himself for Lefty's contemptible trick.

Cheated of victory the big fellow glowered across at his opponent, then his control, short lived at best, deserted him. He sprang for Donald with a bellow, and Donald met him half-way with a powerful right arm swing that closed one eye.

The next few seconds saw lively work. Lefty charged like a bull, without plan or method, while Donald, cool and self-possessed, chopped him to pieces. It took only a moment to close his other eye and then, with a vicious left to the jaw, Donald sent the big man in a crumpled heap to the floor.

The charmed circle was broken. Some of the men bent over Lefty, helping him up and away, while the rest gathered about the Dude. Beef shouldered his way into their midst and clapped a heavy hand on the boy's shoulder.

"Somebody taught you the Bible young. 'Let not your right mit pipe what your port flapper's doin'.' Yer sure fixed Lefty's face so it looked like a map of Europe after the World War. Here's five bones. Now beat it. Step on the gas while the goin's good,

kid, 'cause, believe you me, if Lefty ever sees yer agin, ye won't hev the chance of a bottle o' booze at a bricklayers' convention."

Donald, straightening out his stiff fingers, regarded their scraped knuckles with pride, and then fell easily into the vernacular of the gang.

"Beat it? Nothin' doin', Boss. I like this job. I'm coming again to-morrow."

Beef took his accustomed attitude, hands at his waist and big legs spread.

"Say it again, and say it slow."

Donald repeated the words. Beef turned to the men.

"Listen to the Dude, boys! He likes us! He wants to call again."

"We'll let him," someone said.

"Sure, he's a regular guy!"

Beef turned a sudden suspicious eye on the Dude, now the centre of an amused and friendly group. Subtly his manner changed.

"What's the big idea, anyway, Dude?" he questioned softly. "Doin' this on a bet?"

"No."

Through half-shut eyes the Boss squinted at Dude.

"Joined the brass buttons gang?"

"The brass buttons gang?"

"Yuh. The tin-whistle boys?"

"Tin ——?"

His very apparent real ignorance of the lower East Side terminology for police and detective squads finally convinced Beef. He grunted and jerked his head in final consent.

"All right. Go to the office on West Street and sign up for the Union. Bring your card to-morrow night."

Donald thanked him and turned away, then, suddenly bethinking, he turned back again.

"By the way, Boss, can you tell me where I can get a room around here?"

Beef's impassive face studied Donald a moment longer. Finally he shook his head.

"I don't get yer. You must be ding batty in yer whistle sniggers. But you don't act it. Hi! Mike! Ain't there a room in your house empty?"

The little cripple slid quickly to the floor and with a crutch under one arm, hobbled to the side of Beef. In the gray light his wizened face was as old as a man's.

"Sure. Where Tim lived. Ma ain't rented it since."

"Show the Dude, Mike, where he will take up his new residence."

Donald laughed with the others, lifted a hand in farewell, and turned to follow the little lad who was moving at an amazing rate down the entrance to the dock.

For about five minutes Mike led Donald over cobbled streets and down dark alleys, across which several large gray rats boldly scuttled. Eventually they came on to one of the unevenly paved narrow lanes in lower New York, where shaky frame houses lean toward each other as though mutually seeking shelter and support.

Into one of these houses his diminutive guide sud-

denly turned, and Donald followed, stumbling in the dark. Without ceremony Mike hobbled down a narrow hall and pushed his way into a room at the rear. A woman was lying across a bed, and Donald paused at the door, horrified to see Mike lean over the foot of the bed and poke the woman with his crutch.

"Ma! Here's a lodger. Beef sent him."

Donald heard the bed creak as the woman lifted herself from a heavy slumber.

"What's 'e like?"

In a whisper Mike put across his answer.

"He's a dude. Beef sez if money was feathers, he'd look like a bird of paradise."

The bed creaked some more. Evidently a feathered dude inspired curiosity, or required inspection, for in a second a slatternly woman with coarse gray hair straggling over puffy eyes, and a weak pasty face, pulled the door wide and looked him up and down.

Donald took off his striped cap, supporting himself with one hand against the wall, for with rest in sight his fatigue became almost too much to be borne longer.

"I'm sorry to disturb you, Madam. I've been working all night and Beef Donaghan's directed me here as a possible lodging-place. Will it—er—be convenient to let me have a room at once?"

The woman stared blankly, then her pasty face spread into a wide, toothless grin and she shambled forward. She nudged Mike as she passed. "Call Mame. 'S way, Mr. ——?"

"Mack," Donald supplied.

He followed her back down the hall again and into

the first room on the right, where she lit a squealing gas jet. Without glancing around to observe if there were more than a bed in his new quarters, Donald asked the woman the price. She gathered her loose mouth into a purse and reflected.

"This 'z is a corner room. Best we got 'n th' house. Bed's double. Ought ta have two'n here. 'S worth five bucks s'week," she concluded, with a firmness she was far from feeling. Five bucks! When all she'd ever gotten was two! But he was a dude, a Bird of Paradise, just waiting to be plucked.

"All right," Donald nodded, and the woman, wishing she had asked ten, backed to the door into Mike and the curious Mame.

Mame had apparently risen from her bed also, for a soiled wrapper of a dingy color was closely held about her. She was small, with thin, stringy black hair bobbed about a sharp-featured little face. Donald could not guess at her age. The only striking thing about her was a pair of large, green eyes under heavy black brows, looking strangely out of place in her pale, pointed face.

They were fixed on Donald in such an intent way that he came out of his stupor of weariness in sheer surprise. After the family had withdrawn—Mame silently, Mike with his tapping crutch, and the mother with her words sliding raggedly into each other in an unkempt way in keeping with the rest of her—Donald remained in puzzled thought. Of what did those intent green eyes of Mame's remind him?

But his overworked body gave him little chance for

meditation. It creaked and groaned and weighed a ton, so with a sigh he sank heavily on to the lumpy bed. As he unlaced his shoes his tired glance took in the room, which up to now he had not fully appreciated, and when he realized in full measure the drab ugliness of his new abiding place, a little smile pulled at one side of his mouth.

Besides the bed there were two other pieces of furniture in the room, a straight chair standing drunkenly on three legs with its seat completely caved in, and a dingy bureau of indescribable color, over which hung a glass looking as though it had been rescued too late from a fire. Donald walked over to it and squinted into its cracked and blackened surface. Two inches gave him a fairly good glimpse of his nose. It was a good thing, he thought, that he had decided to shave only once in three days.

For the rest, the specked and greasy paper had been half torn off the walls and Donald made a mental note that he would soon tear off the rest. The windows—two—in lieu of shades and curtains, hung films of dirt and cobwebs over the glass as an aid to any modest persons wishing to be shielded from the curious gaze of those passing on the street without. There were a few nails on the wall for his clothes and a shredded bit of soiled matting on the floor by the bed.

Donald approached the bed rather cautiously, but under his inspection it appeared to be clean. At any rate, he was too completely done up to be fussy. He flung himself flat on his back, felt of his knuckles, and grinned.

Almost immediately he was asleep, so deeply asleep that he remained blissfully unconscious when the green-eyed Mame, after furtively peeping through the keyhole, ventured into his room and placing a towel on his bureau, turned and looked at him for a long moment.

She looked at Donald, then she looked about the room and saw its familiar aspect with new eyes. She frowned at the windows, glared at the broken chair, and stamped a small foot at the mirror. After which she crept stealthily to the bed and looked down on the sleeper. In spite of his stubble of beard and dirt, his clear-cut features and finely shaped hands, with their well-kept nails, revealed him to the girl.

"A dude, all right," she muttered.

Then, bending closer, she saw his raw knuckles. Mike had already told her the story of the fight, and as she looked at the marks of battle, a curious look—a mixture of mystification and admiration—came into her sharp little face.

"It sure beats the Dutch." She shook her head. "It sure beats the Dutch," she repeated, and then she slipped silently from the room, leaving Donald, dreaming wildly of hauling Lefty out of a bath tub into which he next plunged, only to find it inhabited by queer bugs that lived on oily lily pads resembling five-dollar bills.

CHAPTER XVII

THE "PRACTICAL" DREAM

STRANGE days followed. There were hours of steady, unremitting labor at which Donald stuck with a persistence that surprised him when he paused to think of it. Yet he did stick, in spite of that first week of excruciating physical agony when unused muscles rebelled at unaccustomed exercise, in spite of blunders on his part which invited Beef's harsh, loud-voiced anger, and the thoughtless laughter of the men about him, in spite of a natural recoil from the brutality of this new life and the insensitiveness of the people among whom he lived.

After his nights of work there were days of heavy, dreamless sleep, when the noises and odors from the house and street outside troubled him not at all. And at three in the afternoon Donald would struggle up from his bed, fighting off his weariness and sleepiness because he wanted the next four or five hours in which to get acquainted with these folk who were to be his friends and neighbors for the rest of his life.

In a few weeks' time he found that they were, indeed, capable of a friendship unlike anything he had known in the upper circles of New York. They were beautifully helpful to each other, amazingly ready to lend a hand in time of trouble, deeply sympathetic over the fortunes and misfortunes that visited their neigh-

bors. Because they never knew when trouble would visit them, and they in turn would be glad of a boost over difficult paths, because their greatest interest, when their hours of drudgery were over, lay in the play and interplay of human life about them, they made something beautiful of their concern for each other. And as Donald grew to understand them and their ways, he felt among these people a greater bond of brotherliness, and a larger spirit of willing coöperation than he had ever known before, for they were bound together in a common need and a common sympathy as his self-sufficient and wealthier friends had never been.

There was much food for thought in even his casual contacts. But when he began attending the meetings of the union, and certain men became entities to him, —with ideas if without education—Donald found himself hard put to it to see his way clear. Old standards were swept away, and were not yet replaced by new ones. It was a puzzling period.

But his greatest interest did not lie in the meetings where feeling ran like wildfire and speakers expressed themselves with a freedom and passion that was new to him. Economic conditions work themselves out sooner or later—that wasn't his concern. Nor were reforms and strikes to his liking, because the goal was too distant, and the way too painful. He wanted to help in a more direct and immediate way. He still longed for that personal touch, that way of private service, that sense of feeding hungry hearts, which had been with him so long.

There were opportunities for such work, of course, in the confusion of misery and poverty about him. There was Beef's wife dying of tuberculosis, whom Donald sent away for a while for right food and rest. There was the woman next door, bedridden and deserted by her husband, who saw winter approaching with no coal or food or money in sight for her. There was the policeman at the corner, whose six children were motherless and half starved—— Oh, there were plenty of ways in which Donald could give his help, and he unhesitatingly and generously gave it. But back in his mind all the time was the realization that he was not yet carrying out his idea as it might be worked out, that he had not yet found the big scheme that Marcia had visioned for him, and a glimpse of which he himself had caught in that solitary hour on the mountain tops.

So he groped his way through new experiences, finding at last that his mind circled most about the little family with whom he lived,—little Mike, with his helpless, swinging leg and sixteen-year-old Mame with her suspicious, sharp-featured little face, and her green eyes that haunted him so strangely. He had thought at times that he was only interested here because he could most clearly see their wretchedness, but as the weeks went by he came to feel that there was something deeper than that driving him to his earnest study of them. Vaguely it came to him that Mame and Mike were only two of hundreds—no, thousands—of children. If he could find a way to help them, might not that same way help those others? In fact, didn't

the hope of making the world happier—any part of it, rich or poor,—lie in the children?

So he tried to make friends of them,—and found it difficult business. Mame was wary, sullen and bristling with defiance. Mike was indifferent. But Mike was easier, for he hid in his boy's heart a secret admiration for the big Dude who had licked Lefty, which made him willing, occasionally, to exchange man-talk with the stranger who had invaded his house.

In one of these talks Donald chanced upon a discovery that at once amazed him and opened the way to amicable relationship with Mame. Mike's stumbling block in school was arithmetic and Donald found his casual suggestion to help him resolving itself into a tutoring period of an hour every afternoon. It was while he was doing this that he learned Mike was passionately fond of music and could play the violin with unusual skill. Ikey—the second-hand man down the street—owned an instrument which he had never been able to sell and it was Mike's privilege once in a rare while to be allowed to play this at Ikey's store, because in this way it was kept in tune!

An arrangement was at once made which brought joy to both Ikey and Mike. Donald wanted to buy the violin for the boy but the old Jew, sensing a chance to get a regular income, was only willing to rent it for a few hours each week. This, however, was so much more than Mike had ever had that it was heaven to him, and Donald found himself admitted, by this act, to the inner sanctum of the family. He was not only invited to share in Mrs. Jones' gossip

but was no longer avoided by a silent and furtive Mame.

She surprised him by knocking at his door one evening shortly before he was to go to work. As she did not get home from her "job" until after six and he left at eight, there hadn't been much opportunity, outside of Sunday, to see her. And on Sundays she had usually gone out early and returned late. So he went toward her to-night somewhat eagerly as she answered his summons and stood hesitantly in his doorway.

"Why, Mame, good-evening."

Across the girl's canny face flitted a little look of quizzical humor.

"Good-evening, Mr. Mack," she answered elaborately. Then, advancing into the room she put both hands on her hips and looked around her with slow deliberation.

"This is an elegant boodwar, ain't it?"

"It answers the purpose," he answered smilingly.

Mame sniffed and tossed her head, aggressiveness in her tones.

"It ain't worth no five bucks. There ain't nobody ever paid more'n two. Ma skinned you good and proper,—but then you're the kind that'd let a woman pick the gold fillin's outa your teeth."

"Well—then, that's my fault."

She gave him a sudden sharp look.

"Sometimes—if I didn't know you was a real man I'd think you was a dumb-bell," she told him frankly. "Rentin' Ikey's violin, now, fer Mike,—wot do you get out of it? Wot's the big idea?"

"Nothing big about it. Mike's cut out of a good deal that other boys have, you know. It seemed a way to even up things. Besides he loves it, and he has surprising ability."

Quite suddenly her manner changed.

"It sure was decent of you." She paused and shifted from one foot to the other. "I'd—I'd kinda like to show you we ain't doin' all the takin'——" She stopped in such evident embarrassment that Donald helped her kindly.

"What's *your* big idea, Mame?"

"Lemme loose in this room once, will yer?" Mame burst out. Then seeing Donald's bewilderment, she went on rapidly: "It's a pigsty. Look at them cobwebs. I could anyways get them down."

"I can't do without those cobwebs, Mame," Donald said gravely. "They are sunshades and lace curtains all in one."

"You lemme in here," Mame repeated stubbornly. "If I take down them shades I'll give you others. I'll make it look swell."

Donald pondered a moment.

"Well, all right. As long as I'm going to stay here I'd just as soon have it look a little sweller myself." His hand went to his pocket. "How much will you need?"

Mame's head lifted proudly.

"None o' your money."

"But, Mame, I won't take yours."

"'Tain't mine. It's Ma's. She's give it to me ——" she laughed a little. "Well, it's yours anyway—some

o' what you pay her a week—but I won't take no more. Ikey's gotta lotta junk that I can git fer next to nothin'."

Remembering Ikey's store Donald was doubtful whether his room would be improved after Mame's visit there. He preferred what he called the chaste austerity of his quarters to anything he had seen in Ikey's crowded shop, but the girl was waiting, with an intense hungry look in her eyes that puzzled Donald, and there was nothing to do but nod assent.

The agreement was that he and Mame would exchange rooms until she had finished the improvements she planned during which time he must on no account "peek." He laughingly consented transferring his belongings that night, and then waited in some curiosity for several weeks, until the door was flung open and Mame's voice came to him down the hallway.

"Yer can give it the once-over now, if you wanna, Mr. Mack!"

Hiding his secret misgivings under an assumption of eagerness, Donald went toward his room—and stopped short in amazement just inside it, while Mame, furtively watching his face, breathed a little sigh of relief, and leaned against the door waiting for his first word.

The sight that met Donald's eyes was indeed astounding, for the room before him had been miraculously changed by the skilful touch of a woman's hand, from a dirty squalid hole into a place where color and light abounded. Were these ivory painted walls, giving off a soft glow like sunshine, the same ones that

had dripped dirty wall-paper a while ago? Were these clear and shining window-panes so prettily framed now by figured curtains of blue and yellow the same gray and grimy squares where spiders had made their home? The furniture—the looking glass—were they the same, really?

Donald turned slowly about, seeing nothing he remembered yet finding in everything a familiar look. For the bed had been painted gray to match the woodwork of the room, and with its immaculate white bedspread—where before dark blankets had lain in tumbled confusion,—it appeared like new. The bureau, too, had been covered with fresh paint, while the drunken chair had disappeared and in its stead was a new one with a complete set of legs and a cane seat—gray also.

This much Donald recognized, but the folding screen, covered with a gay cretonne like the curtains, and hiding a wash-stand on which stood a pitcher and bowl, was new. The two strips of blue carpet on the gray painted floor were new. The mirror, the glass globe on the freshly gilded gas jet, the gray table in the corner where stood a single black bowl of artificial yellow roses, the yellow candlesticks on the bureau holding black candles—all these were new. And the big easy chair, placed between the windows near a shelf that held his books, was new too—and the final touch.

Mame could wait no longer. Her trembling excitement had gone and an immense pride surged through her, which she tried to conceal beneath a careless

jauntiness. Swinging her shoulders she strolled toward him, with her fists on her hips.

"Well?" she demanded, truculently.

Donald put out both hands and took hers for a moment.

"It's beautiful, Mame. It's perfectly beautiful. I can't believe it; that's why I can't say anything."

Mame glanced about.

"Some joint, if I do say it," she admitted, carelessly.

"How did you do it? How did you *know how* to do it?"

Mame laughed.

"Well, when I come in here and then went to Ikey's store, I sure was up against a rubber fence. I bounced away two or three times before I got an idea. But after I got it ——" she shrugged. "Water and paint did it."

"Yes, but it's the combination of paints." Donald was looking at her intently. "Those sunny walls with that gray woodwork—and the—the—I don't know—the little black touches here and there. It's—it's artistic. It's finished."

To his surprise the color suddenly rushed up to the girl's face, and clasping her hands, she lifted them to her breast, speaking with a startling intensity.

"I don't know what yer used ter, Mr. Mack, I never been in a pretty house in my life, but if you was as crazy about pretty things 'n' places as me, you'd know how to fix 'em when you got the chanst ter."

She drew a shivering breath and laughed apologet-

ically, making as if to go. But Donald drew her to the big chair and took the straight one opposite her, wanting to lead her on to further revelations. They came, hesitantly at first, but as she felt Donald's genuine interest, passion blazed up in her and her words poured out more and more easily.

"I—I think about colors all the time. I can see 'em—new ones—soft ones—like Mike hears music. This house—it jest makes me nearly sick at my stum-mick the whole durn time. The only way I can live here is to think it different." She looked about her, her green eyes glowing in her excited little face. "I'd like ter bust loose in every room like I done in this. Honest, Mr. Mack, sometimes I near *die* fer wantin' things clean and decent and *pretty*."

As she finished, looking up into Donald's face, he knew in a flash what memory she revived in him. It had struck him that first night he saw her. For in the depths of her eyes was the same hunger he had seen in the eyes of Marcia, so many months ago. Only this child was starved for beauty, while Marcia wanted the companionship of her own kind.

"Of course," he nodded in understanding, and Mame, half ashamed, half frightened at her outburst, settled back into the depths of the big chair, with a fervid sigh of relief. Then, shyly, she unveiled the rest of her secret desires.

"I could make cloe's too, if I gotta chanst."

"Could you?"

"Yeah. I—I dream about doin' it sometimes—the feel o' stuff in my hands—all them soft, shiny lookin'

things I seen in winders — Sometimes them colors make yer kinda melt inside —"

She stopped abruptly.

"Did you make that dress you're wearing?"

"This old thing?" She spread out the skirt with pride. "Sure, I make everything I wear. It's lasted some little time too, I'll tell the world, but it's still kinda—kinda —"

"It's pretty. I've noticed you wearing it on Sundays. I like red on you."

Instantly she was at ease.

"Yer do? Say! You gotta smooth line. How'd yer get that way?" She laughed. "But it's old stuff, Mr. Mack. I'm on to it. Dig up somethin' new." Squinting into space, she grew serious again. "The next dress I make'll be green, green with black on it some'ers, and a spot o' bright orange. Gosh!"

"That'll be pretty. Who taught you to sew, Mame?"

"Who taught me to live? If you wanna learn how, you gotta find out yerself, don't yer? That's me all over."

But Donald, persisting in his gentle questioning, learned more than that. Mame had joined clubs and sewing circles in the neighborhood and had picked up a smattering of knowledge. She had flitted like a restless bird from one place to another, eager in her anticipation of what she was going to get, enthusiastic for a brief while, and eventually disappointed and disgusted. Why was she disappointed? Donald asked.

What disgusted her? Working with stuffs and colors was what she loved—why had she dropped out?

“Aw, cuz that fool of a woman wouldn’t let me put orange with blue on my dress. Said it was too loud. It’d make all the men look at me. I’d orter dress quiet and be a lady. Dark blue! Can’t yer *see* me in dark blue?”

She glared at Donald.

“Besides,” she went on, “I hate the fuss o’ sewin’. Scrunched all up takin’ little dinky stitches—‘jest this way’—I hate it. That ain’t my idea.”

“What is your idea, Mame?”

“Oh, slinging stuff over a figger—tryin’ out colors that way. An’—an’—drapin’ ’em, yer know. I don’t wanna do the work. I want somebody else, that ain’t got the bean I got fer color, to do that!”

“But to learn any trade, Mame, you’ve got to begin at the bottom and work up. You’ve got to know how to tell these girls the way to put a dress together.”

“Aw! I know that now. Ain’t I made my own? Anyways, what is there to work up *to* in that class?”

Donald let the matter drop, but he puzzled over it ceaselessly, and his thought led him to quiet investigation.

He began visiting various places. Schools, churches, church houses, club rooms, community houses—all the established centres came under his careful inspection. The free kindergartens and clinics for medical help—there wasn’t a spot that was overlooked. And as he went about he saw that for the most part they filled a need and had their recognized places with their

claims to success. If he had judged them only as they appeared to him at first glance,—swarming beehives of enthusiastic activity,—he might never have come to his final conclusion. However, measuring their help as applied to the cases of Mame and Mike, it became apparent that something was basically wrong with affairs.

For while Mame joined everything and soon dropped out, Mike joined nothing. He was inarticulate as to his reason for scorning what they had to offer, merely shrugging his little humped shoulders and replying briefly:

"Aw, they *make* yer do what they plan out fer yer. I wanna do what I wanna do. There's enough I gotta do in school."

Wasn't it possible there were others feeling as Mame and Mike did,—girls taking what came because they craved sociability—and yet finding themselves dissatisfied in spite of it? Boys refusing to compromise—like Mike? He talked with them, and found it was so. They were all eager, restless, hungry—and only half fed. What was the matter?

He puzzled over it for weeks, until finally light broke. And by November he had evolved a scheme of service which he believed would at once satisfy his desire to share his wealth with others, and at the same time help hundreds of people to the realization of their dreams. The details were not clear, but the plan as a whole grew and fixed itself firmly in his mind, needing now only the stimulus of other interested minds and financial backing to put it into motion.

He had come to see that his work, too, as he had told Mame, must begin at the bottom and work up. His best chance for improving matters at hand lay with the youngsters in the schools. That thought had gone through his mind before but he hung to it now and built on it.

With that much settled, he watched them more closely,—not in their play hours at clubs, but in their work hours at school. And the longer he observed the more he came to see that each was as different as black is from white. A variety of personalities, every one bristling with individuality, were herded together in classes. Children with varying degrees of intellect, with physical perfections or imperfections, with “difficult” or “nice” dispositions, were held together by one invariable system of education. All of them, regardless of intellectual abilities, constitutional disabilities, or spiritual characteristics, were forced like sheep into one fold, presented with a certain amount of work, and expected to do it in an allotted space of time. The thing, as he came to see it, was incredible, ridiculous—worse than that, a crime. A crime of neglect and ignorance.

Why couldn't these children be sifted and sorted? Why couldn't the slow ones be kept together, and the fast ones together? Why couldn't someone discover who could do what, and whether others could do anything, and then give them their chance, train them according to their abilities from the start?

Take Mike, for instance, hating school and battling through arithmetic. But if, in school, he were also

given musical training and the promise and hope of a full musical education, would he not master the arithmetic, and any other obstacle standing in his way? Donald believed he would. As it was now, arithmetic—without any compensation—was a waste of time and energy in the boy's opinion.

Take Mame. Given a chance to study color, and the art of dressmaking, with the belief gleaming before her that some day, if she worked hard, she might be mistress of her own shop, what might she not do?

Peeled down to its essence, Donald saw the school as a tremendous waste of energy, places to which the long arm of the truant officer dragged many children. And he saw the clubs acting as sedatives to the schools. One provided the work, the other the pleasures. Why couldn't the school be established which would combine both within its walls? Or why couldn't work in the schools now be made a pleasure? And why couldn't that pleasure be a strong driving force toward a useful and congenial career? By treating the children as individuals, and grading them according to their abilities and potentialities, and by then leading each to the occupation for which it was best fitted, might this not work out? Might they not be trained to become square pegs in square holes,—contented citizens, rather than driftwood on its seas?

The more he thought about it, the bigger proportions the scheme took in his mind, and the vaster became its possibilities. It meant first engaging doctors for physical and mental examinations. It meant

psychological tests, perhaps even glandular treatments in clinics. After that it meant new buildings and new equipments, where the slow ones would be encouraged and helped by special teachers through the rudiments of education; where the "average" students would not be held back by the slow ones, and would be given various opportunities to discover whether they had a leaning in any special line; and where the talented,—the "undiscovered geniuses" of the East Side,—would be discovered and given the opportunity to contribute their gifts, before they were overwhelmed by the struggle to make that opportunity for themselves.

A tremendous scheme, indeed, traced directly to the two starved little beings so close to him—Mame and Mike. Watching them as they struggled in the whirlpool of life, Donald had come to know that there were other Mames and Mikes.

The more he thought about it the better he liked his idea. Here was something big, something vital. His deepening sense of satisfaction made him impatient to confide in someone, to get another's opinion. He had been sure of himself before, and had made a mistake. He wanted to make no mistake this time. He wanted not to seek the financial aid he would need until he was thoroughly convinced of the soundness of his scheme. But he must talk it over with someone. Who would be the best one?

He would go back to Jane, first. If she approved, he would then go to his grandfather. Yes, he'd try it out on Jane first. It had been months since he had

been there. He would go at once—the following Sunday —

But the following Sunday he did not go to Jane's, for Mame fell ill with influenza. For three days she was out of her mind with a high fever and Donald was busy helping a distracted Mrs. Jones to care for her.

When, late the following Saturday afternoon, she lay weak and white but on the road to recovery again, Donald was sitting by her bed, acting as nurse until Mrs. Jones returned from shopping. Mike was curled up on the foot of the bed, plinking away softly on his violin, and Donald was occupied trying to reassure Mame about her "job."

"I'll lose it. I've been out a whole week," Mame said, with brave indifference.

"But you've been sick. Don't they allow for illness in those big stores?"

"Sure—if you're really sick. But they usually send someone to look you up and find out. You said nobody'd bin here."

"Nobody has."

"Then I'm fired. If they'd cared they'd 'a' sent the inspector around here 'fore I was gone two days."

"Well, I wouldn't worry. I'll see what I can do the first chance I get. You attend to the business of getting your strength back and by the time you are well again you'll find your place is waiting for you at the store. They probably are having a hard time without you."

Mame laughed shortly.

"Sure they are. They need me bad. Like the Hudson needs a drink. Didn't I hear someone come in? Yeah, they're feelin' their way down the hall. Better light the gas, Mr. Mack. It gets dark early now, don't it? And let 'em in. Bein' sick is a lonesome job. I'm dyin' fer company."

Donald rose and went to open the door. A cold draft from the unheated hall blew into the room and, fearing for Mame, he invited the figure who stood there to enter, then closed the door behind her.

"We've been slow about lighting the gas," he said. "It makes such a noise ——" He struck a match as he spoke and held it to the jet. There was a screech and a flare—then, turning, he looked at the stranger, and his voice rang suddenly through the room, almost a shout of joy.

"Marcia!"

"Donald!"

The unexpected rush of surprise and pleasure was quickly followed by a pause of embarrassment as memories flooded in. They dropped hands and stood looking at each other uncertainly, when Mame, who had risen on her elbow and was watching in wide-eyed curiosity from her bed, saved the day.

"Well, if that ain't the canary's tooth-brush!"

CHAPTER XVIII

BITTER-SWEET

BOTH Donald and Marcia were glad of the children's presence. There were explanations to come, of course, and each was eager for them, but at the same time each felt a certain strangeness in the other's company that gave them pause after that first moment of happy recognition.

So while Marcia sat on one side of the bed, holding Mame's thin hand in hers, and explaining that the epidemic of influenza had kept her so busy looking up the sick girls from the store that she hadn't been able to get here before, Donald sat on the other side, pretending to shield his face from the glare of light as he surreptitiously studied the girl who came and went so strangely in his life.

There were subtle differences now in her appearance, which Donald observed but could not exactly explain. She had on a blue suit again, he noticed, but it was not the one he remembered. There was a stylish cut to this one, and it was set off by a little brown fur piece about her throat, and a pretty hat that nestled down over her dark hair. His eyes went down to her well-shod feet, and up again to the gloves and pocket-book that lay in her lap. Yes, she was decidedly more prosperous looking than he had ever seen her.

But the differences he saw did not lie only in her clothes. Deeper changes had taken place, which he

could not quite understand. Baffled, he sat in silence, studying her profile as she talked to Mame. How soft and sympathetic her voice was—he had never forgotten that. Nor her gentle way of saying just the right thing. His attention was distracted from her to Mame, whose gaze clung to the “inspector” before her with an adoration in it of which both seemed to be unconscious.

“And is this your brother?” Marcia asked, smiling across at the boy who had hobbled to a chair in the corner and sat staring at the newcomer.

“Yes, Mike—his name is.”

“Mike is easy to remember. Is that your violin?” The boy smiled and shifted it about on his knees.

“Sometimes it is.”

Marcia laughed.

“And whose is it the rest of the time, Mike?”

“Ikey’s.”

At this point in the conversation Mame rushed in, determined that Donald should have the share of praise and attention which her laconic brother might not give him.

“Mr. Mack wanted to *buy* it fer Mike, but Ikey wouldn’t only let him rent it,” she explained quickly.

“Mr. Mack?”

“Mm. Him.”

At that Marcia gave Donald the first full glance he had had since their greeting. In it there was neither surprise nor question. It was the same sort of a straight, steady look that she had sent him long ago when he passed her going into the church. A look that

seemed to say a great deal and yet committed her to nothing. And almost immediately she rose.

"I suppose Ikey had his reasons," she said smiling. "And now I must go. Don't try to come back Monday, Mame. It would be very unwise. I'll come again Tuesday or Wednesday to see you." She went over to Mike and held out her hand. "Good-bye, Mike. I hope you'll let me hear you play the next time I come. Will you?"

The boy nodded in shy delight, and Marcia turned to Donald, fastening her fur collar as she spoke, and pulling on her gloves.

"You turn up in the most unexpected ways and places," she observed. "Having found you here once, I sha'n't be a bit surprised to see you here again."

"I live here," he explained simply.

"Oh." This time she was surprised, and Donald went on quickly, "We have a good deal to say to each other. May I go home with you?"

There was an almost imperceptible pause before Marcia gave her consent and the two went out into the November twilight together.

Conversation on the roaring subway was next to impossible, but Marcia, seated next to Donald, took this opportunity to study him and saw what in her surprise and excitement escaped her attention.

He was no longer the perfectly groomed grandson of a millionaire. His suit, wrinkled and ready made, did not quite fit his broad shoulders. There was a broken shoe string in one worn shoe and his hands showed signs of manual labor. What had happened?

She lifted her glance from his hands to his face and met his straight gray eyes. A slight flush rose to her cheeks and she was glad to rise and lead him out at the next station.

Marcia and Dads had found a studio apartment in Greenwich Village, and as Donald entered the big square room with its many windows, he felt at home again with Marcia for the first time since she had appeared in Mame's room. Was it because old Dads rose from his work-bench in a corner and came forward in the same dignified unsurprised way to greet him? Possibly that contributed,—and yet there was, too, the feeling that here was the same quaint charm and simple friendliness which had prevailed in the cottage in the woods. None of the furnishings—excepting the work-bench—were the same—yet the atmosphere was, and in it Marcia and Donald smiled at each other, feeling suddenly a delightful relaxation and a sense of “going on” rather than of “beginning again.”

Donald found himself in a great easy chair before a wide fireplace talking to Dads near him, while Marcia moved about in the dimness behind them, humming a little song as she prepared supper for the three of them. It was all very familiar and sweet. Had the months between his last visit with these people been a horrid dream? Was he back in the little cottage? Was life still unchanged? Hadn't it moved on? Or was this a dream?

This was no dream. His glance moved about the room,—soft in its unusual coloring of blues and purples—and touched first on one lovely old piece of

mahogany and then another. There weren't many, an ancient desk, with the high glass-windowed top for books, a drop-leaf table, and an old sofa. One or two other pieces were covered with figured and flounced gray chintz, of the same tones as the papered walls. But it was the deep purple rug on the floor, the striking oil painting of New Mexico in dull blue tints hanging over built-in shelves, and the curtains of bluish-purple at the windows that gave the distinctive touches to a room of decided charm.

When Marcia took her place opposite him later at the supper table, wearing a soft blue dress that just matched her eyes, and poured the tea out of the old silver teapot into quaint flowered cups and saucers, it seemed to Donald that she fitted most perfectly into a background that exactly suited her. New York with its clamor and filth and mobs of tired, hungry people dropped away. There was only this lovely shadowed room high up in the air, the cheerful blaze of the fire, the silver-haired old man,—and Marcia.

"And now," Marcia said in her old friendly way, "please explain how it happens you are living down there where I found you."

So Donald did, briefly and enthusiastically, skipping lightly over the weeks in the mountains with Genevieve which led to his spiritual awakening, mentioning only casually his grandfather's refusal to see him before he left, and ignoring entirely his fight with Lefty that first night.

But in spite of his omissions the girl opposite understood more than he realized. Her imagination and her

sympathy enabled her to fill in the gaps and as she listened she realized that the man before her was not the same boy who had wooed her in the woods. He had greater poise, and a much more mature outlook on life. The delightful nonsense with which he had amused her seemed to be out of reach now. He was purposeful, busy and happy.

Purposeful—and happy. Happy because he was purposeful. He no longer needed her,—probably, indeed, he no longer wanted her or gave her a thought. Well—she was purposeful and happy, too. She didn't need him. She had "smashed her fence" without his aid and had made countless friends. Her life was no longer bleak and lonely. She had a beautiful home around which there was no queer fence of broken chair backs. She had congenial work. She had Dads. She was glad all this had come to her before Donald came back, she told herself, for now she could meet him as friend to friend, wanting nothing he had to offer because she had succeeded in acquiring everything for herself.

"And now," Donald said in his turn, "you tell *me*. How did you happen to come here? What are you doing?" He glanced about again at the lovely room. "It's a riddle I can't guess."

Marcia laughed lightly and her eyes as she gazed into the fire became deep and sweet with tenderness.

"Dream Ships!" she said softly. "How many we set sail in life, don't we? and how few ever come into port again with the cargo we hoped for! I had sent—

"I don't know how many—sailing out over the seas, and then—once upon a time—one came back."

She laid a hand over Dads for a moment before she went on.

"It came back, bringing the most precious thing in the world,—an old friend, a pupil of Dads' when he was teaching. Dads had lost sight of him for years, and stumbled across him one day quite by accident. He brought him to our cottage and—somehow he learned all about us. About me, I mean," she corrected herself. "He was so easy to talk to! The first thing I knew I had told him all I had told you—and a little bit more. Then"—her sweet eyes misted over for a moment—"then he did the *loveliest* thing—the most beautiful,—the most friendly thing you can imagine."

Donald was bending forward over the table, listening eagerly.

"What?" he asked.

"He gave up a dream of his so that I might have a dream of mine. He gave up a trip to Europe, got off a magnificent ship and came sailing back in the little pilot, to give me my chance at a newer, fuller way of living."

"*What was his name?*" Donald demanded in an intense voice.

"Gray. Henry Gray." Marcia looked at him in surprise. "Why?"

He caught himself.

"Oh—why—nothing. I thought perhaps I might—know him. That's all. I know a chap who'd do

just exactly that sort of thing. It—it was a queer thing for him to do, wasn't it?"

"Queer? Well, perhaps ——"

"Queer—yes. But, of course, more than queer. A *corking* queer thing, I mean ——"

Donald was trying hard to recover himself. Marcia mustn't know! Marcia must never guess it was really *his* money had made her dream come true. He couldn't have planned it better. Evidently Henry hadn't told her it was a gift to him. He had pretended it was his own—to do with as he pleased. Good old Henry! Wise old Henry! What a queer world! What a dear, queer old world! He was thrilled with pleasure and delight, but he only told her quietly she hadn't yet explained what her dream was, what her work was ——

"Oh, of course! Uncle Henry helped me to that, too, as well as to this new and lovely home. I am"—— she drew herself up with a funny little pretence of pride—"I am the Personnel Manager of the store where Mame works."

"Personnel Manager," Donald repeated.

"All of that," she nodded. "Are you properly impressed?"

"Enormously. And what do you manage?"

"Personalities!" Marcia laughed.

"But *how* do you manage to do that?" he asked. "It's the hardest thing in the world! And what do you do, exactly, anyway? It sounds very vague."

"It is mysterious to the uninitiated. I do—oh, almost anything. It's up to me to see that the girls in our employ don't dress too conspicuously,—that hurts

the store—or don't chew gum when they're serving customers! I have to find out why they're late, and if they're sick. I have to patch up quarrels and break up unhealthy friendships. I have to keep them contented with their work and get them changed to other departments if they're not ——"

"A Herculean task," Donald said in admiration.

"But I love it. I am—do you remember, Donald? —'touching all kinds of people in all kinds of ways.' I have friends from the Boss Manager of the store all the way down to little Mame. I dine at the Ritz Carlton one night, and share a bowl of soup with a Jenny McQuaid the next." She lifted her face to his, and he saw it ashine with happiness. "There isn't a fence that hasn't a gate in it somewhere through which I can go. I *love* it."

Donald saw that she did, and curiously enough, her joy brought him misery. Marcia's life was full. She was busy and contented. She no longer needed him. There were all sorts of people to bring her pleasure now. What could he add to her supply? Here, exactly, lay the difference in her which he had detected in Mame's bedroom and could not quite understand. She was independent and free and contented. With this thought came the stinging realization that he had never been as much to her as she had been to him. There had always been in her mind certain reservations and doubts about him. He remembered now. How could he have forgotten?

It was the pricking consciousness of that which made he evening bitter-sweet for him. And when he rose

at last to make his farewell there was a little hesitancy in his manner before he asked the question that burned in his heart.

"I may come again?"

"Why, of course!" she answered in surprise.

"I wasn't sure. You seem so busy—and you have so many other friends—now."

Her glance was sweet and steady.

"But I never forget old ones. Please come—quite often." She gave him a smile entirely free of coquetry, and spoke in simple earnestness. "I think our friendship should mean more now than it ever did. We both have learned so much that we both have more to give."

It was comforting—but it wasn't enough. Friendship! It wasn't enough, Donald told himself savagely, on his way home.

CHAPTER XIX

AN IMPASSE

SIX weeks later Donald was again in the attractive studio where Dads and Marcia lived. Not a week had gone by since his first evening there that he hadn't seen the girl two or three times, and with each visit his love for her grew stronger and deeper. But while Marcia's sweet friendliness never changed, neither did her little air of independence which held Donald silent.

It was Sunday. The snow was falling quietly outside, muffling the noises of the street and veiling the harsh ugliness of the buildings. Donald found that Dads had gone to keep Henry company for the evening meal and he and Marcia were alone in the fragrant, firelit room with its purple shadows. He took the big chair and Marcia smiled across at him from a low rocker.

"Now," she said eagerly, "tell me the Big Secret."

For Donald had told her he had something of importance he wanted to confide in her. It was the scheme for his future work, of course. He had gone with it to Jane who had encouraged him by her instant approval, but the few practical questions she had raised had sent him back to do further thinking before he told it to anyone else.

Now, he felt, he was ready to shout it to the world. It was planned, in his mind, down to the small details. The only thing needed was estimates from competent

people as to the cost of putting through such a large venture, and that would come later—after he had seen his grandfather and succeeded in getting a promise of financial backing.

So he leaned toward Marcia, flinging back his head in that way so familiar to her, his eyes, as he talked, blazing with the enthusiasm which filled him. Yet there was not quite the same impulsive eagerness that Marcia remembered before, for this time it was controlled by a keen, clear mind.

It would have been hard not to be swept along by Donald, anyway, but Marcia was glad that her approbation could be quite whole souled this time. She found herself listening, at first with skepticism, then interest, and finally with the same enthusiasm that filled Donald. Before he had finished she was interrupting him with quick, rapid questions, and little exclamations of approval, and when he stopped she bent forward and lightly laid a warm hand on his for a second.

"It's a splendid idea, Donald," she said warmly. "Simply splendid. Helping people to help themselves—oh, it's so much bigger and better than your first plan."

Her clear eyes said a little more than that, and quite suddenly Donald lost his head. He caught and held the hand that Marcia tried to snatch away, and lifting it to his lips, he kissed it hotly.

"No—please—Donald——"

"Marcia—dearest—I haven't changed. Don't you know I haven't?"

But she shook her head, not looking at him.

"Neither—have I, Donald," she made low reply.

That hurt, and Donald set his teeth, but something in her attitude,—her averted head and warmly colored cheek of which he caught a glimpse—made him wonder. With sudden hope, and still holding her hand, he bent nearer.

"Marcia, I don't believe that."

She gave a trembling little laugh, and shrugged.

"You must."

"But I don't. Look at me."

She shook her head.

"Donald—you—I—this is—useless."

"Are you still not sure of me?"

She hesitated, her eyes on the fire.

"I—please—Donald. I can't talk about it."

"You've got to talk about it." He was suddenly masterful and Marcia trembled inwardly. He mustn't guess. It was all so hopeless! "You must talk about it. It's only fair. I didn't mean to speak so soon, but now that I have, I want to know. Exactly. Are you still not sure of me, Marcia?"

It was hard. A little pulse began fluttering in Marcia's throat and her eyes filled suddenly with tears. She winked them back bravely.

"Let me go—and I'll talk——" she whispered. Yet even after that, his near dearness was very upsetting and she had to struggle to keep her voice even, her eyes clear and cool. But she managed, and seeing her so, Donald's hopes fell again.

"It's not quite that—now. I'm surer of you than I

was before—you've surprised me—but—I'm still wondering a little ——"

"What?"

"Oh, I hate to hurt you!" she cried, at sight of his set face.

"Never mind me. I can stand it. Tell me, now, the worst that you think of me because"—his gray eyes blazed suddenly—"you won't get another chance. Sooner or later you're going to think the best of me!"

Marcia caught her breath, her little hands clasped so tightly in her lap that the knuckles showed white. Something was pounding in her head and her ears were ringing, while through the noise came her own voice—far away.

"You see—you've only lived this new way a few months. Suppose you went back——? Suppose you had to choose between your old life and this one?"

"But I have chosen."

She shook her head.

"You know the old way is still open to you, though, Donald. The door hasn't been shut in your face."

The noises weren't quite so loud. The hammering stopped and the bells grew fainter. Marcia's sweet voice went steadily on, somehow getting past a big lump in her throat.

"But—as I told you—it isn't quite that—now. It's simply that—I'm never going to marry,—anyone, Donald."

"Nonsense," he told her roughly.

"It isn't. You don't understand. You don't know

me. I could never marry as so many girls do. Half loving. Making secret compromises with my dreams." She shook her head. "I couldn't ever do that. I'd have to love"—her voice suddenly grew passionate—"with every bit of me! I'd have to want it so much I couldn't be happy without it! I'd have to rather *die* than live alone without my man!"

She drew a quivering breath and stopped abruptly, lifting her hand to that bothersome lump. Donald, thrilled by her unexpected show of emotion, spoke huskily.

"Some day you'll love just that way."

"No. It isn't in me." Her low voice shook.

"You've just shown that it is."

"No," she repeated. "It isn't in me. My head always gets hold of my heart,—and tells me what's sensible—and right. It will keep me satisfied all my life with my work."

She rose, as if the matter were ended,—and found instead that it was only begun. For Donald, looking up at her, so close and yet so remote, saw her steady eyes, and that decided lift of her chin. But he saw, too, the mistiness of those eyes and her chin's quivering, and rising with her, he took her suddenly into his arms.

His mouth coming down on hers—so hard! His hands, hungry and hurting,—and the next instant so reverent and gentle! His broad chest and deep, rapid breathing—Marcia was helpless. And when he pressed her head against him and kissed her hair, she began weeping quietly.

"Sweetheart—why, Marcia! Oh, I wouldn't make you cry for the world."

His dear voice, rough with emotion—Marcia's hand stole up to his shoulder—around his neck—and drew his face down to her wet cheek.

"Donald—Donald—why did you?" she murmured.

"I couldn't help it."

"But it only makes things worse."

"No," his voice held a triumphant ring. "Better."

She shook her head, her eyes filling with tears again.

"You don't understand."

"Well," he put his hand under her chin and gently kissed away the tears, "suppose you try to explain."

"Let me go, then."

"Never."

"Donald, dear—I can't talk—I can't think—this way."

"Ah," he laughed, "but you can love! Even if it isn't 'in you.'"

There was another terribly sweet moment in which the heat of their passion dried her tears, and she clung to him, laughing softly—breathlessly—— But soon she put her face against his coat, hiding it from him, and then with her hand tight in his, she tried to tell him.

"You see, dearest, I am still 'Marcia of the Marshes.'"

"But you won't be long! You'll be Mrs. Donald McIntyre! How soon can we be married, dearest? How long will it take you to get ready?"

"That's just it. I'm never going to marry you, Donald."

At the note of seriousness in her voice, Donald tipped her face to his. And what he saw there gave him a little fright.

"My dear ——"

"You see. It's just because you *are* Donald McIntyre III, and I *am* Marcia of the Marshes—'a bit of rubbish nobody ——' "

He put his hand over her mouth.

"Hush! That's rot," he said sternly.

She pulled his hand down.

"Not to me. No, dearest, you must listen. It's just because I feel this so greatly that I didn't want you to know how I—how I love you. It only makes things—harder."

"Marcia. You might as well save your breath. I won't listen to such stuff and nonsense."

Marcia sighed and tried to draw away. But he would not let her go, so they went to the floured sofa, and, hands tight in hands, talked the matter over.

"You see, dear, if you were anyone but just who you are —— But I keep thinking of your grandfather. What would he say?"

"What does it matter?"

"Oh, so much." Marcia's wise, sad voice brought the first cold chill of doubt to Donald's mind.

"For a McIntyre to marry a nobody!" she shook her head. "And all your friends ——" Marcia was remembering Genevieve's cold acknowledgment of an

introduction that night at the theatre. "I couldn't, Don. I wouldn't. I won't."

"My friends matter less than my grandfather!" Donald cried hotly. But Marcia stopped him.

"To you, perhaps. But not to a woman. You don't know in how many hundreds and hundreds of little ways women can hurt each other. You'd take me into your life—and I'd be a stranger—without credentials. Oh, I'd try not to mind—you'd try not to notice—but sooner or later it would get through."

"We'll be too busy to care ——"

"Not all the time, Don."

"—And we don't have to live that way, anyhow. I'm through with it."

"I've thought of that, too, dearest. But if your grandfather *should* recognize me, he'd have his claims. He's old—and you're his only grandson. You can't leave him out of the reckoning entirely. But if he *shouldn't* recognize me,—he'd disown you." Marcia shook her head. "Don't you see? I have no right to bring that on you. I wouldn't *dare*."

So they argued. And the shadows closed round about them, and the fire grew feeble and fell apart and at last in a room that was dark, save for the glowing heat of the embers, they sat in wretched happiness, clinging silently together, having discovered the uselessness of words.

Much later there came a familiar footfall on the stairs outside, and Marcia put away Donald's hands. He spoke quickly, harshly.

"Listen. Before Dads comes—I'll never give you up."

His face was close—his breath warm on her cheek—— She whispered brokenly.

"It's no good, Donald—no good. I'm never going to marry you, but—I'll never stop loving you either."

CHAPTER XX

CHRISTMAS EVE

AFTER that the days were a mixture of pain and bliss, of poignant, biting joy and sweet, aching misery. Their love acknowledged, they could not keep away from each other, and each hour of close companionship served to add fuel to the fires of their passion, while at the same time, Marcia was in no way shaken from her determination.

Seeing the folly of entertaining him at her studio, the girl began insisting that they meet in public. So their snatched hours together,—difficult enough to get with his work occupying him at night and hers through the day—were usually spent in skating, walking or at the “movies.”

“I love the movies, Donald,” she would say. “You get so close to people. Do you know what I mean?”

And he would know and would love her more for that great world-love in her heart.

A deepening sense of the hopelessness of the situation grew upon him. While he would not acknowledge Marcia’s feeling to be right, he had come gradually to understand it. Her sensitive shrinking from intruding where she might not be wanted—her common sense recognition of the difference between the other women he knew and her,—her pride—— These mingled feelings were a strong force in the girl he

loved, and,—because he was not the kind to ride roughshod over other people's preferences even though he disagreed with them—he could not press his claim. And Marcia, appreciating his generosity, and wanting to make things as easy as possible, tried more and more to keep the conversation off their problem. She talked of their work—hers and his—and thus bridged over for a while an aching void.

His educational plan filled a good deal of her thoughts, and one day she spoke of the subject uppermost in her mind. She had a suggestion to make. Did Donald mind? In her work, she came in touch with the two trained nurses employed by the store. She had had many interesting talks with them, and had happened to overhear much of their conversation concerning glandular treatments. The little brother of one of the nurses was in the hands of a New York physician at that time, receiving regularly thyroid doses for backwardness. Did Donald want her to get this doctor's name?

He thanked her. He would be glad for any names she could get—all information—and any further suggestions.

Then, she told him, in her frank, fearless way, if she were Donald, she'd consult the doctors before she did the grandfather.

"You ought to have *all* the facts, Donald. You ought to have an exact idea of the cost of your plan. And you ought to have the interest and approval of at least one or two well-known physicians before you ask your grandfather for his help."

But Donald disagreed. He'd feel like a fool taking a busy doctor's time to talk this over when he wasn't sure of the financial backing necessary to accomplish his purpose. If he couldn't sell his idea to his grandfather first, there was something wrong with him. But he was sure he could. He'd try it anyway.

Marcia said nothing more but she shook her head slightly.

"You're stubborn, aren't you, when you get your mind made up?" he asked quizzically, but there was a gleam of pain beneath the humor in his eyes.

"I guess I am," she admitted regretfully.

"Well," he told her meaningly, "I'm persistent when I get mine made up. And it's been made up—a long time—about you."

But she would have no more of that.

"How soon," she asked, quickly, "will you speak to your grandfather?"

"I'll have to very shortly," he answered soberly.

Donald's money had been spent lavishly right and left. Lavishly—but not, after all, unwisely, for none had been thrown this time into careless hands. Medicine, food, daily milk for babies and old people, clothes for the shivering, coal for the sick ones half frozen in squalid homes,—in such ways as these had hundreds of dollars gone. In less obvious ways, too, Donald had relieved suffering, for he had secretly paid rent where sickness kept the wage earners from work; he had quietly called in doctors when medical attention was needed; and in one instance he had sent a woman to the hospital for a necessary but expensive operation,

guaranteeing all of her expenses for the six months of her stay there.

So that, as Christmas drew near, Donald realized that his sinking funds were nearly sunk. After he had put aside for Mrs. Miller—the only one of his early “clients” who hadn’t disappointed him—ten thousand dollars to take care of her boy’s schooling for the next five years, and after he had subtracted what he had already spent and added to that the money necessary to meet the obligations he had undertaken to carry, there wasn’t a great deal left. Not enough, at any rate, to start the venture which he was so eager to begin.

Yes, he’d have to see his grandfather soon. He’d go right after Christmas.

“But why do you wait?” Marcia asked.

“Because,” he answered with smiling candor, “I’m a bit of a coward. I’ve planned a party Christmas Eve,—haven’t I told you?—in my room. It’s especially for Mame and Mike, though there’ll be others there. Mame has been talking of it for weeks. You can’t imagine how much it’s going to mean in their lives. If I go home before—and Grandfather turns me down cold—it’ll spoil the party. I’m afraid I couldn’t come back and put it over as I want to.”

Marcia nodded.

“Of course you’ll be there,” he told her. “You and Dads.” He laughed. “It’ll be a motley assembly. Mame and Mike and their mother. Beef and his wife. Ikey and his little girl Judith. You and Dads—all my most loyal cohorts.”

"Why not Jane and Henry, too?" Marcia asked.

"Of course. Thanks."

There was to be a Christmas tree, he told her, and games and gifts and music of Mike's making. Could Marcia think of anything he had forgotten?

"Ice-cream."

"You're dead right."

"And I'll make some little cakes and bring them. Have you plates? Or spoons?"

"I think," Donald laughed, "I'd better tell everyone to bring his own!"

Marcia clapped her hands as delightedly as a child.

And to judge by some of the faces in Donald's room that Christmas Eve, it was more than fun. It was heaven on earth. Mame was transfigured by joy, the sullenness and suspicion quite gone from her face as she listened to Marcia's generous praise of the tree which she had decorated. Mrs. Donaghan, brought home for Christmas, more frail and worn looking than when she had gone away, lay on Donald's bed, her face expressing an unearthly quiet peace that caught at the heart of Donald every time he looked at her and made him redouble his efforts to have this evening a perfect memory for everyone there. Beef was in Donald's big chair, afraid to move about lest he upset the tree, or jar the table and spill the platter of tiny vari-colored cup cakes. Mrs. Jones had taken her chair close to Mrs. Donaghan and sat nodding her pleasure in an almost unbroken silence, her pasty face cleaner, her hair and dress neater than Donald had ever seen them.

Judith played in a corner on the floor with a small

black kitten,—her Christmas present from Donald. Her father, Ikey, was astride a chair, talking with rapid gestures to Jane, while Henry,—a withdrawn observer as usual,—looked on from a remote corner.

Everyone was here. The party was on, Donald—acting as Santa Claus—was handing around packages with a joke and a laugh for each one, while Mike, who sat on the washstand, his crippled leg dangling, his wizened face turned heavenward, poured music into this renovated room of Donald's as though his life depended on it. Ancient hymns were chased away by rollicking street tunes. Haunting old melodies and stirring patriotic songs lured beautifully forth by a skillful loving hand became mixed with Scotch ballads and Southern lullabies. Finally, Mike swung into the farewell song of *Madame Butterfly*, and his little audience fell silent half in amazement, half in appreciation.

At that moment there came a knock at the door. The sad, familiar strains throbbed on through the air and Donald, instead of calling his summons, went quietly to the door and opened it.

Genevieve Powers stood on the threshold.

CHAPTER XXI

THE LOVE TRAIL

WHEN Genevieve read the note Donald left for her on the mantel shelf of the Lodge she had been filled with a blind fury. It seemed to her in that moment that all her air castles were crashing with a horrible finality to the ground, and there was nothing left but a deafening echo in her ears and the dust of ashes stinging her eyes.

Following her anger came a time of black despair. Nothing was of any use. Further effort would be futile. And then she knew that she could not thus easily let Donald escape her. They had been too near a moment of madness for her to let him go now without a struggle. Memories of their weeks together and of the companionship he had given her flooded over her, thrilling her with their sweetness. Let him go? Ah, no! She loved him. She *wanted* him.

Swift as lightning, her thoughts flashed through her mind after that. Donald had gone. Where? Back to New York. Back to his home, in all probability. Why? Why had he gone? It was puzzling for a while. Had "business" really called him? Somehow she did not believe it. Illness? He would have said so. What then? He was afraid. He was afraid of her. If she hadn't been caught with that headache—if there hadn't been a storm—he would have had no chance to know he was afraid. They two would have

rushed on in the hot, mad way they had started and by now their engagement would have been announced. But fate had worked against her, and in that short time when he had paused to think, he had been less sure—and a little frightened. His going, then, was flight. A flight from her. She knew it as surely as she knew her name.

It was then that she saw a glimmer of renewed hope. If he was afraid of her—and had fled—the answer was very simple. All she had to do was follow. She lifted her head, her face clearing magically. Donald wasn't the only one who could be called to New York! She would follow, she would call him up on the telephone, see him often, and it wouldn't be long before she could again work him up to the point of proposing. Then—ah! She laughed to herself. Let her get hold of him another time and he'd not get away!

She made her plans with caution. Too swift a following of Donald would put on her going an unpleasant appearance. She delayed it for a few days, until she had had time to write her mother and a real telegram came which she could carelessly display. Then, on her way at last, she lay in her berth in the sleeper that was thundering its way back to a hot and dusty city, kept awake by a few troublesome doubts.

Once back in her own rooms she telephoned Donald, and when Dobson told her that he had "gone out," she left word that she would call again later. But another attempt that night, and succeeding ones in the next few days brought always the same answer.

A little angry, a little hurt, a little mystified and anxious, Genevieve wrote Donald a note. In a week's time she had received no answer and by then she was filled with grave alarm. Donald was always a gentleman. He would not ignore her overtures to that extent. He must, then, be ill or away.

Once again she telephoned the house.

No, Mr. Donald wasn't ill. He had gone out. Yes, he had been gone two or three weeks. No, Dobson didn't know where. No, Mr. Donald had left no message. No, his mail wasn't to be forwarded, he had said.

With a frown between her eyes Genevieve sat down in her living-room and planned a campaign. First she wrote to various of her friends whom she knew were giving house-parties, casually making inquiries about Donald as she did so. While waiting for answers to these she ascertained at all his clubs that he was not there, and when negative replies finally came back to her from all her friends she was indeed so beside herself that she acted upon an unexpected, illuminating idea the moment it came to her.

The woman who was helping him with his Dream Business! What was her name? Jane! Jane Harcourt. Why hadn't this occurred to her sooner? Weeks had trailed by, endless weeks of futile effort. Here it was nearly the end of September. She would go at once—this very day.

She found Jane's address in the telephone book, and, armed with a cool composure and quiet determination that effectually concealed the deep turmoil stirring

within her, she invaded Jane's rooms that afternoon.

Jane was at home, and though she was completely taken aback for a moment by the appearance of this strange and beautiful girl who appeared to know her and whose face was vaguely familiar, she gave no sign. Genevieve was invited in, was made at home, was served tea and sandwiches, while Jane, talking easily of everything under the sun, sent her sharp mind chasing in and out the dark corners of her memory until she had her placed.

The same girl who had walked with him at the wedding. The girl whose mother had snatched him from Jane's side at the reception. The "Genevieve" who had been at the house-party and whom Donald had so casually mentioned. So casually, indeed, that her suspicions at the time had been aroused. Now they were confirmed.

So she was ready for the girl when she finally managed, with an adroit skill that Jane had to admire, to bring the conversation around to Donald.

"It seems a little strange—his disappearance. So far as I can gather, it is quite complete and entirely unexpected. I shouldn't think about it—or bother to hunt him up—except that he offered to help me this fall."

And she handed over to Jane Donald's note.

"—If I can do anything for you in the fall when you are ready to begin work, please let me know."

Genevieve, lovely, lazy and coolly calm, shrugged slightly and laughed, as she waited for Jane to speak.

"He was going to give me introductions. I'm all ready to begin and am held up by his disappearance. Taking charge of a picture gallery in the Public Library is about all I'm fit for——" She spread her hands deprecatingly. "If I can't find Donald, I'll simply have to go out in the streets and beg. It's a horrible outlook. You can imagine," she spoke lightly.

It sounded real. It had an air of plausibility—yet Jane hesitated. She was in honor bound not to reveal his whereabouts to anyone, least of all to one of his old friends or the family. How could she refuse? And it was impossible for her to lie. She neatly sidestepped.

"I'm sorry I can't help you out, Miss Powers. Donald *did* come here, and intimated that he was going away, but he gave me no address at the time. It was, of course, natural for you to think I should know where he was because we were connected in—in business—for a while. But that's ended, you know."

"No, I didn't know it."

"Oh, yes, he gave up that idea quite some time ago. He spoke vaguely of doing something else but he didn't make clear what it was to be. I'd like to help you, though." The clever Jane knit her brows in thought and then magically her face cleared.

"You say you've telephoned the house?"

"Yes. Many times."

"And Dobson always gives you the same answer?"

"Yes. I don't think he knows anything."

"Neither do I," Jane agreed. "But I think he's had his orders."

"You mean ——"

"If anyone knows Donald's whereabouts wouldn't it be the grandfather? Get in touch with him, Miss Powers. Dobson is simply obeying his instructions."

And having disposed of Genevieve, Jane promptly forgot her. Donald's next visit did not come for so long, and he was, at the time, so filled with his new idea, that there was no opportunity for a discussion of anything else.

In spite of Jane's earnest solicitude and friendly suggestions, however, Genevieve felt frustrated. She had counted on Jane, yet Jane had failed her. Going back over the interview she could not recall a single slip of the older woman's that could convince her Jane had the knowledge she seemed to deny having,—yet Genevieve left feeling that she had been fooled.

However, the idea of getting in touch with the elder Mr. McIntyre was not a bad one. At any rate it was the only thing left to do. It was a last chance which Genevieve took with a sense of desperation.

But when Mr. McIntyre was reported "ill with a cold" and continued "ill with a cold," Genevieve felt indeed that she had lost the struggle. She did not believe the old gentleman was sick. It would have been in the papers. He either knew where Donald was and didn't want to be questioned, or he didn't know—and didn't wish it found out. In either case Genevieve was up against the last wall, and try as she would, she could see no way of getting over, under or around it.

It was then that Fate,—which had so misused Gene-

vieve before,—stepped in and smilingly gave her a helping hand over a difficult place.

She was shopping late one afternoon in November, and as she stood trying to make up her mind between two materials she was fingering, a woman leaned over the counter, speaking to the sales girl who was waiting on her.

“Have you seen Mame this morning?”

“No, Miss Kingston.”

Instinctively Genevieve looked around. The girl who had asked the question nodded and smiled her thanks and moved quickly away, and Genevieve stood looking after her.

There was something familiar about her,—and the familiarity connected itself with Donald. Who was this girl? Why should she be linked in Genevieve’s mind with the man for whom she was looking?

And then a picture clicked into place in Genevieve’s mind. She was in a theatre. Donald was a few seats ahead of her, and beside him—this girl. They were laughing and talking. The girl was pretty. Donald appeared extremely interested. Then, as the girl rose and Donald helped her on with her coat, Genevieve saw that she was poor. A “client,” perhaps. At any rate, nobody to whom she need give a second thought.

Yet as she looked after her now, Genevieve did give her a second thought. It occurred to her that if Donald had once been interested in this girl he might still be. It was just a chance—but it was not to be overlooked. She dropped the material she was fingering and spoke carelessly.

"I like this one the better of the two. I'll take three yards of it, please. How much did you say it was? Yes, charge and send it." She handed out a card.

"Oh, by the way, is Miss Kingston employed here?"

"Yes, ma'am. She's the personnel manager."

"Is that so?" Genevieve smiled brightly. "I know her. I met her a long time ago and I'd like a chance to speak to her again. Where would I be apt to find her in the store?"

"Oh, I don't know, ma'am. She's all over. You might ask the manager. Maybe he could 'phone around."

"And where is he, please?"

"His office is on the fifth floor."

Precious time was lost while Genevieve found the manager's office, but once inside there was that in her appearance and her manner which made the brief-spoken gentleman rise and give her a chair while he at once pressed buttons and rang bells and sent little messages all over the store for Miss Kingston.

Fifteen minutes later Genevieve was regretfully informed that Miss Kingston had just left. She had gone early to look up a sick employee.

"Perhaps I can overtake her," Genevieve suggested, rising. "Will you give me the address?"

The manager hesitated.

"It's—it's down on the East Side, Miss—Madam— Unless you know your way—it's not agreeable—or safe, perhaps."

"Is it safe for Miss Kingston?" Genevieve inquired crisply.

"She's used to it."

Genevieve said nothing more, she simply waited, expectantly, but when the manager reluctantly wrote an address on a piece of paper she gave him a brilliant smile.

"Thank you so much. I shall probably overtake Miss Kingston on the street below."

But she did not overtake Miss Kingston on the street below and when she stepped out of the subway at twilight into the narrow dark streets of lower New York, where unfamiliar faces of women stared at her curiously and big burly figures of men paused as she passed, she almost wished she hadn't persisted in her determination.

She could, of course, go back to the store the next day and get Miss Kingston's home address. But perhaps she lived down here too! It was possible. At any rate she was too nearly at the end of her adventure to turn back now. She'd push on, find the girl for whom she sought, and somehow persuade her to go uptown with her again. She did not like being down here alone. It was, as the manager had suggested, "not agreeable or safe."

A man lurched suddenly out of the darkness and spoke to her. Genevieve suppressed a scream and hurried on. Suppose she got lost? The dark, narrow ways held unsuspected dangers and she was suddenly afraid. These horrible streets! This silent wintry night! These queer, dark leaning houses! It was in places like this where there were street fights—people were killed —

She could scarcely breathe. Another man stepped out of the shadows and followed her. But Genevieve bent her head and looked neither to right nor left. Was he still following? She fancied she heard his padding footsteps and her mind became stiff with fear. She only knew she could not turn now and face that man behind her. She must go on, unhesitatingly.

But when she reached the address given her she did hesitate in spite of herself. The door stood open into a dark passageway like a hungry mouth. There was no door-bell, nor any light. She could not—she did not dare—go further.

But she knocked, jumping back startled as a head was suddenly thrust out of an upper window and a shrill voice called:

“Whatcher want?”

“Is—does Miss Kingston live here?”

“No!”

“I mean, is she here now?”

Shoulders followed the head and a slatternly woman gazed down in curiosity at the girl who shrank a little into the shadows.

“I—I was given this address. I was told I’d find Miss Kingston here. I’m sorry——”

Genevieve wanted to do nothing now but get away, for one or two passers-by—men—were lingering to hear the conversation. Wasn’t one of them the same one who had padded silently behind her? She thought so.

“Never heard o’ Miss Kingston. She don’t live nowheres around here.” The voice overhead grew

friendlier. Here was a new interest, an unexpected stranger. Stretch out the moment as long as possible, for life was dull enough.

"The Joneses live down there, an' the only boarder they got is a man."

"I see. Thank you."

Genevieve started to turn away but the voice held her, and afraid to offend in this strange place, she paused to listen. Afraid to stay—and afraid to go,—for the men still stood near the lamp-post behind her—it was awful.

"Mr. Mack—he is. You make me think of him."

How queer it was—for her to be standing here in the cold dark of a November night talking up to a strange woman about a man she had never heard of. Ridiculous! Impossible! She must go. There was nothing to be afraid of. She would go at once. She would end this uncomfortable situation, pass by those men on the sidewalk and get back to the subway as quickly as possible. She had been silly to come. Simply crazy to act on this mad impulse. To-morrow she'd go to the store again—or—better yet—telephone—and get Miss Kingston's home address.

But the voice above her went on.

"Yeah. You make me think of him. You're in his class. He's a dude, he is."

Lifted out of her fright by these strange words, Genevieve, inspired by a sudden intuition, waited a moment longer to ask a natural question.

"A dude?" she asked. "What's a dude doing—here?"

The woman laughed.

"Workin', eatin', sleepin'—like the rest of us. He's a reg'lar guy—Mr. Mack is—even if he is a dude."

"He sounds interesting." Genevieve's fear melted as a strange certainty grew. Had her search for Miss Kingston led her instead to Donald? If he lived here—why, she wasn't afraid at all!

"He sounds like someone I know. Only the man I know has ideas about reforming the world. Is Mr. Mack trying to do that?"

"Nope. Nope, he ain't no reformer. He wouldn't last long down here if he was. He's a reg'lar guy. He helps, but he don't do no reformin'."

"What's his first name?"

"Why—I dunno. I dunno's anybody knows. The men call him 'Mack' and the women call him 'Mr. Mack.'"

"Has he light hair and gray eyes?"

"Yeah. That's him all over. And a laugh that comes when you don't expect it."

"How long has he been here?" Genevieve asked.

"He come the middle of August. Think you know him?"

Genevieve thought hard a moment. Glancing at her watch she saw it was not yet five—and the woman had said he worked. He wouldn't, then, be returned from his day's work so she couldn't see him now. There was no doubt in her mind that Mr. Mack and Donald were one and the same. Should she say she knew him? If she did, this woman would be sure and tell—and before she could get here again Donald might

move away. If he were really determined to keep his movements concealed—and the last months proved that sufficiently—he would, at the first hint that someone he knew had found him—clear out. She'd deny all knowledge of him—and come again in the daylight. Sunday might be the best time to catch him. Yes, that was a good plan. He wouldn't work at all on Sunday.

"No, I don't think I do," she answered. "It isn't the same name at all. Well, thank you. Good-night."

Somehow she got away, past the two men, down all the narrow, crooked streets, back to the evil-smelling subway and its comfortable reassuring roar and light. She found herself trembling, but as much from excitement, now, as fright.

Donald was found! She knew where he lived! She could get at him any time! And then on the heels of this thought came others—less joyous.

What was he doing down here? Why had he come? Would she, if she looked him up now, be welcome? Might she not only drive him further from her? The fact that he had voluntarily abandoned his own life and come down to this awful place showed that he had changed. He would no longer be the same, and in that case her old appeal might not work.

It was very puzzling. She could, of course, use the excuse that he had promised to help her, but after he had given her his help—the introductions she had spoken of to Jane—what then? She didn't really want them. She had no intention of working.

No, that wouldn't do. Going to Donald with that

plea wouldn't get him back. And Genevieve realized sharply that she must get him back. She must somehow lure him away from here back to the old surroundings, back to ease and comfort and beauty. It was only in that atmosphere that she had any hold on him. If she saw him here, the contrast between her and these ugly, miserable women would only react to keep him here in his rôle of "helper." Genevieve knew Donald and she was astute enough to realize all that.

But how to get him back? What call would be answered?

She pondered over it for weeks, knowing it was better to go slow and make no mistake. And at last, just as she was about to give up hope of finding the effective appeal to make to him, a smiling fate again stepped in. And Genevieve, eager, self-confident, triumphant, made her way to the dark little house for the second time late in the afternoon the day before Christmas.

CHAPTER XXII

CAPTURED

At the sight of the beautiful stranger a hush fell on the room, the music ceased and all eyes turned toward the door. Donald, for a moment stupefied with surprise, could say nothing, then quickly he recovered himself, one thought and only one paramount in his mind. Nothing must spoil the party,—Mame's and Mike's first party, probably Mrs. Donaghan's last. However Genevieve had gotten here—whatever she wanted—didn't matter. The party must go on.

He put out both hands and drew Genevieve into the room, his voice ringing with glad surprise.

"Genevieve! Well, this is great!" Sweeping his arm to the roomful of people he made an inclusive introduction. "I want you to meet all these friends of mine. This is Miss Powers, people! And, Gen, here are the Donaghans, the Joneses, the Sabins——" Some of them bobbed their heads, some simply stared stupidly. Beef lumbered awkwardly to his feet as did fat little Ikey Sabin who made a low bow and the only speech offered.

"Ve like vimmens, don't ve, Beef?" He winked across the room. "De more, de merrier. And beautiful vimmens—ah!"

He attempted another bow,—a sort of circular one

to include Jane and Marcia. It was unsuccessful as a gallant gesture but served to break the ice. There was a little laughter. Donald went on more easily, secretly blessing the old rascal.

"Have you ever met Miss Harcourt?" (He missed the exchange of glances between these two.) "I think not, but you've heard me speak of her. And Miss Kingston. You did meet her at the theatre one night; I'd forgotten. And last but not least, Mr. Gray. Now, Mike! Music! Something lively; we want to dance!"

Instantly, Mike tucked his violin under his chin, while Beef shoved the chairs aside and Judith captured her kitten before it should be stepped on.

"Yes! We have no *ban-anas!*"

It came tripping lightly out, and Donald, tossing Genevieve's fur coat onto the bed, swung her into the dance, throwing an appealing glance at Jane as he did so. Almost instantly she laid a hand on Henry's arm and though he protested, she led him forth and followed the new-fashioned one step with the old-fashioned two step.

Everyone was watching them, everyone was nodding in approval as Genevieve, close in Donald's arms, a graceful, vivid, laughing figure, dropped an orchid from a bunch at her waist on to Judith's upturned face, called gaily to Mike that she wanted an encore, and stood clapping for it beside Beef's chair while she smiled brilliantly upon him.

"Don't you dance?"

"Me? Not—not much," he stammered.

"I'll teach you!"

And she was off again with Donald, having, by her daring friendliness, disposed of the last lingering doubt in the minds of all the onlookers.

All but Marcia, who, though she smiled with her lips, had grave eyes. What was this girl doing here? Why had she come—uninvited? She couldn't guess, but with that intuition that is so large a part of a woman's make up, she was afraid. At Genevieve's entrance a queer little pain had shot through her heart, a stabbing pang of jealousy. And when Donald, forgetting they had met before, had introduced them again, Marcia had been quick to realize that Genevieve would have pretended to have forgotten that. A little thing—but it hurt—and now her gaiety, overpowering the shyness of these people among whom she shone like a star —

Marcia's eyes filled suddenly. She caught her lip between her teeth and bent to pick up some fallen paper pulled off a present. As she sat smoothing and folding it, one thing grew more and more certain in her mind. She had been right to refuse to marry Donald. She would never swerve from that decision.

But the knowledge of her good judgment did not make her any happier. For before her eyes she saw Donald becoming a stranger—not belonging to her—slipping away from this world though he was still here. It had happened before—that night at the theatre. And she saw Genevieve—deliberately putting out her greatest charms, catching him,—holding him,—and, in a dozen sly, triumphant, feminine ways, conveying to Marcia her success.

Around and around they went. Ikey, from a position against the wall, kept time with a large foot, his black, beady eyes snapping with excitement, his rumbling voice keeping up a low accompaniment to the music. Suddenly he could stand it no longer and standing up he shouted across the room to Mame.

"Hah! Ve get in dis too! Vy not? Ikey's not so old, nor Mame yet so young! Come on! Yah! Dat's de vay!"

He rushed upon her and Mame was caught in his hot, close clasp. Being agile and quick she managed to do something that resembled a dance, and winked saucily in answer to Donald's approving nod, but she was glad when the music stopped and she, with the other flushed dancers, could lean breathlessly against the wall while Ikey fanned her triumphantly.

"Hah! Vat did I tole you! Ve vill do anodder yet!"

"The floor's too bumpy, Ikey!" Mame pleaded, at which he glared and snorted.

"De floor! But no! You vasn't on de floor, leetle girl. You vas dancing on my feet de whole time."

"Was she light on your feet, Ikey?" Beef called, wittily.

"Yes! She iss von gut toe dancer! I'll tell de world!" he shouted back, roaring with laughter at his own brightness.

Everyone laughed with him and then Mame quickly rushed to turn the tables on him.

"I'd have gotten off your feet long ago, Ikey, but it was such a long walk," she shrilled.

"Hah! Your tongue ees sharp—like a needle, Mame. Virst, you step on me, den you stab me troo de heart. I leave you and go to dese lady for com-fort!"

He approached Genevieve, mopping a flushed and oily face, as Mike, at a signal from Donald, began another popular air. But the girl was equal to the occasion. Swept into this strange party by an irresistible Donald, she found it curiously interesting and exciting to become a part of it. She could surprise and please Donald, she could satisfy herself about many things, and she could show that quiet little Marcia Kingston—about whom she had some suspicious feelings—a thing or two, all at the same time. She was used to attention, used to men's flattery and to holding the centre of the stage, so she gave a laughing answer.

"I don't question your ability to dance, Mr. Sabin. You've proved you can, already. But I think you *can* talk still better. Bring a chair over near mine, won't you? And amuse me while I cool off."

"Ah, now! You see, Mame? Here is someone dot appreciates *all* my talents."

As Donald passed her Genevieve dropped her handkerchief, and when he bent to pick it up for her he whispered:

"Bully for you, Gen."

Marcia saw only the whisper and exchange of glances so that when Donald went on to her, and asked her to dance with him, she could hardly think for that pain in her heart. But she smiled gaily, shaking her head.

"Ask Mame. It would mean a lot more to her than it would to me."

"I like that!" He was flushed, triumphant, because Genevieve's unexpected appearance was not, after all, spoiling things as he had feared. Marcia, looking up at him, could not hide the love light that leaped to her eyes. He saw it.

"Sweetheart!" he whispered, and watched with pleasure as the color crept to her cheeks.

"Don't!"

"But you are. And I love you. Right this minute, I could kiss you to death."

"Don—please. Go ask Mame before it's too late."
He laughed.

"Isn't Gen a ripping sport? I didn't know she had it in her."

Oh! Marcia put her hand on her tight, stiff throat. The music stopped. No one had danced that time, but Donald demanded another chance. Obliging Mike tuned up and began again, and there was another change of partners.

Donald delighted Mame by bowing low before her, Henry approached Marcia, but Ikey clung to Genevieve's side, while Jane coolly sat herself on the arm of Beef's chair, filling him with a frightful embarrassment which his best efforts could not quite conceal. Ought he to rise and dance with her? Ought he to give her his chair? Or ought he to accept her position as naturally as she had taken it?

While he struggled she looked down at him, a warm, comprehending smile lighting her eyes.

"It's all right, Mr. Donaghan. Stay just where you are. We're both comfortable."

He heaved a sigh of relief.

"Well, whatever you say——" Then, after another curious look at her, he burst into frank speech. "I've never met you before, but you seem to be a regular guy—like the Dude. An' he is a real one. Do you mind my askin'—who is this bird that just lit in here?"

"A girl he's known all his life."

"Sure. I piped that. But what's she want?"

Jane shrugged.

"A new thrill, maybe."

Genevieve approached, tired of Ikey.

"Come, Mr. Donaghan! It's time for that dancing lesson."

He was horribly embarrassed.

"But—say—I—honest——"

"What! a big strong man like you—bashful?"

She teased. Jane watched silently. A clever girl, but she wished she hadn't come. While poor Beef, not knowing whether or not to take Genevieve seriously, was so amusing in his puzzled bewilderment that the dance ended in a riot with everyone shouting with laughter.

They were all hot and breathless. Donald suggested ice-cream and there were loud sounds of approval. He brought in the big freezer from the alleyway, leaving it in the hall outside his door. While he served it, Genevieve, unaccustomed to waiting on anyone, stood talking to him, unmindful of the fact that

Marcia and Jane were both busy passing the cakes and the plates that Donald filled.

It was at this time that Mame slid up to Beef, her eyes in her sharp little face, darting about the room. Henry had joined Jane near the bed. Mike, alone on his perch, was eating with concentrated energy and enjoyment. Marcia, having seen to everyone's comfort, took her plate over near Judith where the two of them, like children together, fed the kitten melted ice-cream under Ikey's voluble directions. Genevieve and Donald were alone near the doorway.

Beef put the same question to Mame that he had propounded to Jane.

"What's she want? What's she after?"

Following his glance Mame looked at the two talking together in low tones, then down at her plate.

"Don't be dumb," she muttered.

Beef scratched his head.

"They're a good-lookin' couple, all right. But what about *her*?" He nodded to Marcia. "Don't she want him too?"

"Maybe she does," Mame expertly smoothed a large spoonful of ice-cream with her tongue, "and maybe she don't. But take a tip from a spring chicken that knows as much as any old bird in this alley, whether she wants him or not, the other one'll *get* him."

Meanwhile Genevieve was making the most of this moment alone with Donald. Flushed with the excitement of this novel situation, and with eyes like stars under her wide picture hat, she seemed to him as beau-

tiful as ever,—more so, possibly, by contrast with the others about her.

"It's surprising—and yet not," she said in her low, thrilling voice. "You always were different. But tell me—I've a million questions to ask—do you *live* here?"

"This is my room."

Her sweeping glance spoke volumes.

"Don dear, don't try to tell me you like it."

"I do, though."

"Are you happy?"

"I never was happier."

His earnest answers had the ring of truth, and interrupted Genevieve's flood of interrogations for a moment. She looked at him, unbelieving, yet half convinced, and as she met Donald's steady eyes, she knew that it was so. He had found something, down here in these awful slums, that he had never found before. Something satisfying. What was it?

"Why are you happier here?" she demanded curiously.

It was his turn to study her. Could he make her understand—this spoiled, lovely girl? At least he could try.

"I'm a man for the first time in my life—doing a man's-size job—living among real men and real women, Gen. Besides, I'm needed here. I—it's hard to say. I work, you know. It gives a backbone to life. And I like my work."

"Your work? What sort of work?"

"I'm a night stevedore. I'm on from ten to eight,

loading and unloading cargo on the big liners," he answered.

"Not really!"

For answer he spread out his calloused hands, showing his broken nails and the places where the dirt had ground into his skin.

"Oh, Don!" she cried in dismay, shrinking a little. Then her eyes swept over him more critically and she observed other differences in his appearance. It was hard to hide her disdain.

"How long do you expect to do—this sort of thing?"

Even as she asked it her eyes widened in sudden memory, and with a murmured apology, she opened the purse hanging from her arm and took out a note addressed to him.

"This was my reason for coming," she explained, giving it to him.

He held the letter unopened in his hand. It was his turn to question.

"But how in the world did you get here? How did you find me? I was never more surprised in my life."

"I'll tell you on the way home."

"But I'm not going home."

"I think you will when you read that, Don," she answered quietly. "It's from Dr. Endicott. Your grandfather is dying."

"Good heavens," Donald said softly, and tearing the envelope open he took out the note, read it and then looked soberly at the girl near him.

"I see," he said slowly. Then,— "How did you get this?"

"I heard he was ill. It's been kept out of the papers, but his friends know. I called up—every day for a while, and finally Dr. Endicott answered and asked me to come there. Your grandfather keeps calling for you. He thought I might know where you were—I was the last one to see you,—except Dobson, you know ——"

Donald could imagine it all. His grandfather, ignoring a slight cold as he always did,—letting it get fastened on him—pneumonia developing—and the well-known, lifelong physician finally called in. Dr. Endicott knew all Donald's "set,"—knew well enough that his name and Genevieve's had been linked together often,—and when no one else could give him information concerning Donald's whereabouts, he had taken a long chance and asked Genevieve if she could help him. But how had *she* known?

"I'll tell you on the way home," she repeated. "It's a long story."

Donald nodded. The light had suddenly gone out of his face. The fun of the evening was spoiled. He'd finish giving out the presents as quickly as possible, then he'd make his explanation and go. It was too bad, but of course there was nothing else to be done. He had a duty. Death could not be lightly overlooked, and Dr. Endicott had said that Donald's return was the only thing that would give his grandfather even a fighting chance now.

And then another thought struck him. Was this

unexpected summons to his grandfather an act of Providence? Was it Fate twisting the tangled skeins of his life into some sort of pattern after all? Was he called back just when he needed money? Just *because* he needed money? Was it possible that he might go to his grandfather, help him back to health, present this new philanthropic scheme of his, get the necessary approval and financial aid, and then come back here? Would he in a few weeks' time, perhaps, be here again, starting, actually starting, on his real lifework?

Donald's wish was father to the thought, but he did not know that. He only realized that viewing the situation from that angle, the going was made easier, the disappointment, to-night, less sharp. In fact, why need the evening be a disappointment to any but him? The party was nearly over, anyway. They all knew he had to leave at eight for work. Why not hurry through giving the rest of the presents, and let them all go home with their pleasure unmarred? All except Beef—his boss—he'd have to get a quiet word to him. And Marcia—of course —— He turned to Genevieve, quickly.

"Don't say a word about this. I'll go with you shortly."

He made good his determination, for as he went back to play host to the others he was gayer than before. So rollicking a joke did he make of the final giving of presents that after the last one had been distributed, it was easy enough to swing the whole crowd—all excepting Mrs. Donaghan—into a Virginia Reel.

Up and down the floor they danced, Mame as light as a feather, Beef lumbering like an elephant and Ikey hopping about like a fat toad, roaring out the orders above the clapping of hands and stamping of feet. And as it was Ikey who saved the party at Genevieve's entrance, and started things moving, so was it Ikey who all unconsciously saved the party at the end for Donald by starting the guests homeward before the merriment could subside.

"Do you see de time vot it iss already? You, Judith, get your leetle black devil and move queeck. All my best customers vill be vaiting at de store before I get dere! Hah! Meester Mack, it has been von grand party—eh, friends?—and de best of it vas—hush! I say dis softly—de best of it vas de vimmens—de beautiful, beautiful vimmens!"

Standing on his toes he blew a kiss to Genevieve, then turning, he scuttled out, driving Judith, like a small puppy, before him.

Beef and his wife followed quickly as the invalid was pretty well tired out and must be gotten to bed before her husband went to the docks. Marcia, unobtrusive and thoughtful as always, slipped out with them before Donald could stop her, and offered to go, with Dads, to Mrs. Donaghan's home, as Beef would be late to work if he tried to do that first.

With their exit the room was suddenly very quiet, so that Mike and his mother, seized with shyness, mumbled something to Donald in faint echo to Jane and Henry, and slid out behind them.

There were left only Mame, Genevieve and Donald.

The latter, turning toward the green-eyed child who was watching him alertly, went toward her. He understood her curiosity.

"I'm sorry, Mame. But I'm not to be here Christmas after all."

"Why?" The single word somehow contained all her disappointment.

He shook his head.

"My grandfather's very ill. I must go at once. Miss Powers brought me the message. I didn't want to spoil the party so I didn't say anything sooner."

"Yer didn't need ter. I smelled a rat long ago."

Donald smiled. Genevieve, fastening her fur coat, lifted her eyebrows. There was no need for further effort on her part to be pleasant, and she was tired—nauseated almost. The room was a mess——

"I'm sorry to leave all this——" Donald glanced about at the litter of scraps of paper, ribbon, and crumbs.

"Fergit it, Mr. Mack. I guess I can do that much fer yer,—fer this." She held up a tight little roll of bills—her present from Donald. "You couldn't ha' given me anything I wanted more."

He nodded.

"Please 'bust loose' in that room of yours before I get back, will you, Mame?"

"Surest thing yer know. But—are yer comin' back?"

There was a little instant of silence, during which Donald had the curious presentiment that he was caught and being led back to captivity.

He stood looking at the sharp face of the small girl near him while Genevieve, motionless by the door, waited in apparent indifference for his answer. Then he spoke quietly.

“Why, of course I’m coming back, Mame.”

CHAPTER XXIII

THE WEB

It was not unusual to have the big house quiet, but the hush prevailing when Donald reached home late that night was different from the stillness to which he was accustomed. Through the halls came faint, unfamiliar noises—soft footsteps, voices held to a whisper, the stir which can be felt rather than heard in a house of sickness where movements are swift, but silent.

Donald was met at the head of the stairs by the grave Dr. Endicott; in whose manner there was an unspoken rebuke and a seriousness that confirmed the statement in his note, which Donald could not yet bring himself to believe.

"I never thought of sickness," he said quickly. "Grandfather's always been so hale and hearty. How is he?"

"I'm glad you have come," the doctor replied. "He's very low. It is doubtful whether he will last through the night. If he recovers consciousness—and recognizes you—there will be a small fighting chance. It is hardly necessary for me to warn you against exciting him in any way."

Donald nodded and stepped into his grandfather's room. The shock of the old man's appearance held him motionless at the foot of the bed a moment.

He was slightly propped against pillows, his face a ghastly yellow against their whiteness. He seemed to Donald to have shrunk to emaciation and to have added years to his age. His eyes were closed, his cheeks sunken, his breath fluttering feebly through a half-open mouth. It didn't seem possible that this wasted figure, lying so quietly beneath the smooth covers, was his grandfather. He could remember only a dignified, forceful personality carrying about with him an air of command which brooked no opposition. This man lying here was stripped of power, a weak and helpless individual, completely at the mercy of those who surrounded him.

A feeling of pity stirred in Donald, and under its softening influence his old resentment melted. Whatever his grandfather had been, didn't seem to matter. He was not that now, and this was no time to cherish ancient grudges. There was tragedy enough in the blows of life which could level so fine and vigorous a character as this one. The least Donald could do was to make easy his going.

He approached the bed and lifted the veined old hand. Mr. McIntyre slowly opened his eyes, from which all the fire had died. They looked at Donald dully for a moment, then a faint light of recognition came. He nodded, and sank into sleep.

For the next two days he lay like death, too feeble to speak or move, but always aware of Donald's presence in the room, and as his absence seemed to fret the sick man, Donald finally established himself within sight of the bed.

Late on Christmas Day Genevieve came, bringing an atmosphere of vitality and warm life into the sick room with her. She was dressed in a white suit, set off by black furs above which her face glowed like a beautiful rose.

Donald, turning from the window at the nurse's whisper, went forward in surprise.

"I couldn't let the day go by without a greeting, Don," she said, handing him a tiny package. "It's only a thought, but—I wanted you to have it."

"You're a dear." He impulsively took her hand. "I don't deserve this. I haven't a thing for you, Gen."

"I don't want anything. Seeing you again is enough," she replied simply. And then, with a warm, friendly pressure, she withdrew her hand from his and quietly left the room.

Donald went back to the big chair by the window where he had spent so much time lately. The little box held a silver belt buckle, exquisitely plain, with his initials on it. He sat looking at it for a long time, thinking how like Genevieve it was. Expensively simple. So was she. She was always dressed quietly, but she carried about with her an air of elegance. How stunning she had been as she came into the room! He hadn't seen anyone as vivid and well for months. He'd grown so used to shabbiness and ugliness and cheapness that he'd almost forgotten there were women in the world who had nothing to do but make themselves beautiful. For that reason it had been good to see Genevieve again. Refreshing.

She came every day after that, bringing a book for

Donald to help while away the time, or a fresh bunch of flowers for the sick man, or perhaps just her own vivid self. She never stayed too long, or departed from her manner of friendly concern faintly tinged with a real fondness for Donald. And in a short time he came to look forward to her brief visits as the bright spot in long and tedious days.

It was on New Year's Day that the old man spoke for the first time. Genevieve had come in and she and Donald were talking in whispers at the foot of the bed, unaware that Mr. McIntyre's eyes had slowly opened and he was watching them with a tired sort of pleasure lighting up his face.

"Do I bore you—or bother him—coming in this way?" Genevieve was asking.

"Oh, not a bit. You save the day for me," Donald said quickly. "And I don't think he notices."

They both glanced toward the bed, and as the sick man caught their attention he tried to say something. Donald hurried to him.

"What is it, Grandfather?"

"Now I'll get well," he whispered faintly.

And he was right. In a week's time he was propped up in bed, eating with an excellent appetite and with enough of his old vigor restored to become peremptory with the nurse and rebellious against her stern command.

"I tell you I *am* well enough to sit in a chair. I tell you I ——" He flung the covers back and Donald was the only one who could persuade him to wait a while longer. Donald was the only one who could

make him see reason and obey the doctor's instructions, and was therefore tied close to the invalid's room for a much longer period than he had anticipated.

At first he chafed at the necessity. He missed the vigorous exercise to which he had grown accustomed. He missed the varied interests that his life in the slums had given him,—the hour of arithmetic with Mike, the chats with sharp little Mame, the talks with Beef and other men, the tantalizingly lovely hours of companionship with Marcia in her big living-room.

Marcia! He had thought of her often, but she seemed so far away, and,—he had to admit it,—she seemed to be receding further with the passage of each day. She had no telephone, so he had written of his grandfather's illness. She replied with a friendly note of sympathy and best wishes. After that he tried to get her at the store several times, and was in a frenzy because he couldn't reach her,—or leave his house long enough to get down to hers. Finally she wrote him another note.

"DEAR DONALD:

"You mustn't, please, telephone to the store again. It's against rules, and a great annoyance to everybody who tries to find me. I'm sorry.

"And, dear, I can't help but feel that our ways have been separated for us. We couldn't have done it ourselves, but now that you are home again—and your grandfather needs you and wants you—please forget me. Really, it's the best and wisest and only thing to do.

"MARCIA."

Forget her! Donald's gray eyes grew steely. But there was nothing he could do now. No, there was no help for matters just at present. His duty lay here and he might as well cheerfully make the best of it.

With Genevieve to help him it became less and less difficult cheerfully to make the best of it. Her visits at the house grew longer and in time she persuaded old Mr. McIntyre that Donald needed air and exercise and change. It wasn't many weeks before he was riding in the park with her through the sunshine of a crisp January day, or skating for a care-free half hour, or walking briskly along the Drive at sunset time.

After that it was comparatively easy to slip back into the old ways of living, and when an invitation came to a dinner and dance, Donald needed little persuasion to accept it. Lights—laughter—music again! Beautiful women with fragrant hair and smiling eyes! Soon enough he'd leave it all. As long as he had to stay here now, why not enjoy himself?

"But you've simply got to have your nails manicured, Donald, before you go, or I won't dance with you once."

Donald surveyed his hands rather ruefully. They were pretty bad but seeing his helplessness Genevieve spoke impulsively.

"Let me do it! Right here. Now." Laughingly she turned to Donald's grandfather. "He ought to let me, oughtn't he?"

"If I were in Donald's shoes, young lady, I wouldn't waste one minute taking up that offer," the old fellow replied gallantly.

"I submit." Donald brought a card table, and sat down before it resignedly.

It was made a gay laughing matter, but the contact of hands, even in this way, brought the low thrilling tone to the girl's voice and a return of the old excitement to Donald. It bothered him. He was half ashamed. How could he—when he loved Marcia? He finally crowded the disturbing thoughts back in his mind.

Meanwhile Mr. McIntyre, Sr., propped in a big chair now, and wrapped about with quilts, watched them in silence, his eyes shining with pleasure. Life wasn't so bad after all. Donald was home—this girl was here so much—it was easy to see they were interested in each other. Things looked pretty good—pretty good. They'd work out his way sooner or later. What a handsome couple they made! He'd like to see Genevieve at the head of his house. She'd be a picture in the old dining-room,—light it all up. Beauty and breeding, both, she had. Yes, she was his idea of a wife for Donald. He'd make no mistake if he took her.

Early in February he surprised Donald by abruptly dismissing the nurse for the afternoon.

"I want to talk to my grandson alone," he said, waving her away impatiently. "Go out and get some fresh air. A walk will be good for you. I don't want to be interrupted."

But after they were left together he seemed to find it hard to begin and remained a few moments in silence, frowning out on the sparkling blue water where

white ice-cakes bobbed about, shining like silver in the clear sunlight.

As Donald waited he realized that this was the first interview he had ever faced with his grandfather with perfect ease. He hadn't an idea what was coming but he was waiting for it in composure, for in the few months since he and his grandfather had last talked together, Donald had found himself. He knew what he wanted to do, and he knew what he could do. He had been tested and proved, and he was no longer shy before any man.

Something of this Mr. McIntyre must have sensed, for when he turned his eyes on Donald's grave face, he addressed him in a new manner. There was in his attitude now that sense of equality, of comradeship, which he had when he spoke to other men. Donald was no longer his grandson, the boy. He was a man, with courage enough to defy all the wisdom of an older generation, and to fling lightly aside a fortune. The boy had stuff in him. He wouldn't be here now if the old man hadn't gotten sick.

He looked speculatively at Donald's face. He was curious about his activities during these months of absence. Where had he been? What had he been doing? How could this new growth be accounted for, a growth which was so apparent, and so strangely caused Mr. McIntyre to hesitate, where not long ago he would have plunged in unhesitatingly.

"In the first place, Donald," he said at last, "I want to apologize for refusing to see you last September. In the second place, I want you to tell

me, now, if you will, what it was you wanted to say then."

This was unexpectedly square, and Donald was quick to appreciate it. He leaned forward and the two men grasped hands, establishing a new relationship in that brief, silent moment. It was an agreement to forget the past and a silent compact that in the future they would build better together.

After that it was easy for Donald to talk. And as he began telling of his new life he was soon carried away by his own interest and enthusiasm. He told it all, omitting, however, all reference to Marcia and dwelling lightly on his own experiences while he gave the greatest space to Mame and Mike and their secret desires. From this he went on to talk of his investigations into the lives of the children, and before he knew it he was fairly launched on his own educational scheme.

Mr. McIntyre listened wordlessly, his bright eyes never moving from Donald's earnest young face, his hands clasped in his lap, his head bent a little forward.

At last Donald was done. He had no inkling of how he had affected his grandfather, who had maintained an unbroken silence and an utterly impassive face. Nevertheless, the boy frankly made his appeal for more money, and then sat back to await a reply.

The old man drew a long breath and turned his eyes toward the river, while Donald, in an agony of doubt and impatience, watched him as he gathered himself together to make reply.

"My boy," he said at last, "that is a noble, far-

reaching plan. More immense in its magnitude than I believed you capable of conceiving. I am proud of you."

His words fell softly, bringing a light of surprise and pleasure to Donald's face, and he leaned forward eagerly.

"I'm so glad ——"

But Mr. McIntyre held up a warning hand.

"With my financial backing and approval it will be easy enough to get the interest of the big minds you will need for such an undertaking. Without it, as you realize, your task will be beset with difficulties."

He paused again, nodding his head ever so slightly, and then abruptly changed the trend of the conversation. As he talked, his voice trembled slightly, and a suspicion of moisture stood in his eyes. Listening in wonder, Donald realized that he was seeing the heart of his grandfather for the first time.

"Donald, in your eagerness to make other people's dreams come true, have you ever considered the possibility of *my* having any?"

"Why—no. I don't believe I have. You seem to have everything."

Mr. McIntyre slowly shook his head, a shadow passing over his face. He leaned forward and laid a shaking hand on Donald's arm.

"Not everything, my boy. Life is empty without certain things. Love, laughter, and—little children." He settled back in his chair, drawing a blanket around him. The movement held a certain gesture of pride, as though by wrapping his body he was cloaking him-

self again in his accustomed reserve. Yet he went on to reveal himself steadily. "It may surprise you to hear me say that, but if you will look over my list of charities, you will find nine-tenths of them connect themselves with benefits for youngsters."

Puzzled, Donald waited to see where this was leading. A strained note of pleading came into Mr. McIntyre's voice, and the desire of his heart brought a hungry gleam to his eyes which was familiar to the boy.

"Love, laughter—and little children. I want them all, Donald, here in the old house. It's been empty and still quite long enough. I want to see you married, Donald, my boy, married to some lovely woman—like Genevieve Powers—so that I may have a little more love about me, hear some merry laughter, and—see my great-grandchildren before I die."

Stunned by surprise, Donald sat motionless and silent.

"That's *my* dream, Donald," the old man's voice quavered a little. "That's always been my dream. You're not going to refuse your grandfather his dream, when you're so ready to help strangers to theirs."

Donald hadn't been prepared for this. What—exactly—did his grandfather mean? He stiffened unconsciously. "Married to some lovely woman—like Genevieve Powers——" Was there a subtle command here? A hidden threat? He made careful reply.

"I hope to marry sometime, Grandfather."

Something in his manner—perhaps it was the

caution of his voice—roused the old man's suspicions. He glanced sharply at his grandson, a sudden fear in his heart. Was the boy already in love with some woman in the slums? Some commoner? He'd find out, by heaven.

"Had you thought of Genevieve?" he asked bluntly.

"Not—seriously."

"She's beautiful and well bred. She'd fit in here admirably. She'd be a wife you could be proud of."

"Yes."

"It would be very suitable."

"Perhaps."

"Well—why not?" crisply.

"Because I don't love her."

There was a little pause, then Mr. MacIntyre renewed his soft questioning.

"Perhaps you love someone else?"

"Perhaps." It was unwillingly admitted, because, until he was surer of winning Marcia, he did not want to tell his grandfather of her.

"Someone—down there?"

"Possibly."

The two men sat looking at each other. Donald's jaw was set, the older man's eyes gleaming brightly. Each was provoked at the other—Donald for the probing into his private affairs, the grandfather because of Donald's evasive replies.

Damn it! The fellow *was* in love with a commoner. Some street girl, for all he knew! It was unthinkable! The good old name of McIntyre given to a

woman without education or refinement? The scandal it would make! The danger to succeeding generations! A picture rose before his eyes. Donald, entertaining the "gang" of his early boyhood days—the rugs turned up—the floors scratched—hoodlums at his table—— It had infuriated him at the time. It would be unbearable now. For just so would his house be overrun by the friends and relatives of this—this——

"Who is she?" he demanded angrily, then without waiting for a reply he went on swiftly, trying to hold himself to quiet, controlled speech.

"My boy, in your position you have got to think of other things besides love when you marry. You've got to think of the family name—what it has always stood for—the kind of men it had produced—what a marriage out of your class may mean to posterity——"

"There've been rascals in our family. There are in every family."

"But there's always been good blood. Donald——"

He held out a pleading hand but Donald ignored it. He would not be bound. It was only lately he had been freed. He would not be led to promise anything under pressure of emotion,—through an appeal to his affections. Certainly he would commit himself to nothing as regarded his marriage. That was his personal and private affair. He rose, a stiff, resentful figure.

"The matter doesn't bear discussion," he said briefly.

His independence roused the older man to sudden

fury. There came back to him a return of his old power. His eyes blazed in his white old face and his voice shook as he flung an unmeditated ultimatum at his grandson.

"You'll promise me not to marry a woman I don't know anything about or I'll not back you up in your educational plan for the East Side of New York! You'll marry a girl I can be proud of—not ashamed of—or I'll have no more of you! Understand? You'll promise me right now or you're no longer my grandson!"

The room was deathly still while Donald looked steadily into the face opposite him. His answer came, with appalling quietness.

"I'll marry whom I please."

Mr. McIntyre's thin hands clutched the arms of the chair. He had staked everything on Donald's interest in his welfare work. He had been sure that came ahead of all other considerations. Donald would sacrifice himself sooner than disappoint others. But marrying Genevieve wasn't a sacrifice! Why couldn't the boy see? Why was he so stubborn?

And then the glare of anger died and was replaced by a cunning look. He drew a long breath and leaned back in his chair.

"Think it over," he said craftily. "Think it over till to-morrow night—at eight o'clock."

Donald bent his head and left the room. He went down-stairs. The big hall was deserted and silent, so, with the dark portraits of his ancestors frowning down upon him, Donald thought the matter over for an hour,

sitting in one of the big carved chairs by the fireplace, his head sunk in his hands.

His mind twisted and turned down devious paths of reasoning, and at the end of each rose always before his eyes the picture of Marcia. Marcia with her cloud of dusky brown hair and her deep, sweet eyes. Marcia, standing in her faded blue cotton dress by the queer little fence, her little head proudly lifted. Marcia, gracious and tender as she served him supper before the fire in her studio apartment. Marcia, defiant and wistful as she told him she was just a "bit of rubbish nobody wanted—or loved." Marcia, womanly and comforting beside Mame's bed. Marcia—laughing and crying in his arms, her soft body against his —

He loved her! He wanted her! Every memory was clear as sunlight, and precious as gold. He had fought Lefty with the urge of her in his mind, because it was for her he wanted to prove himself a man, as it was for her he wanted to succeed now —

Donald struck a fist into the other palm.

To marry without loving!

It meant desecrating a place deep within him which had always been kept holy. It meant trampling on something precious. To marry Genevieve, thinking of Marcia—the thing was impossible!

He paced up and down the hall under the old portraits whose frowning eyes followed him steadily. They were reminding him of his duty—two duties.

One to the feeble old man lying up-stairs, who had only one dream, and only one person who could bring it true. And the other to his people,—Mame, Mike,

Mrs. Donaghan, and all those hundreds of others who had come to count on him and to look upon him as their friend and saviour.

Should he remain true to himself? Or true to them? Should he—now—plunge out of the house and forget the old man up-stairs? Forget? Oh, but could he? Was he made of the stuff that forgets a duty not discharged? He groaned and dropped into a chair again, and the struggle went on.

Round and round went his mind, in a never-ending circle, his thoughts and desires becoming more and more tangled, until he felt most hopelessly caught in a web from which there was no way out.

Marcia—sympathetic, tender, able to “touch all people kindly,” because of her own experience. What a helpmate she would be.

Genevieve—beautiful, passionate, a gay companion ——

Marcia, admirably suited for one sort of life, Genevieve ——

At that moment Genevieve appeared. She was quick to sense that Donald had reached some sort of crisis, and flinging aside her fur coat, she settled down beside him, putting forth all her greatest charm. Dobson was called and brought the tea wagon, and while Genevieve served Donald, making every movement and every word count its utmost, he watched and listened, imagining her here always ——

“It’s a lovely old house.” Genevieve’s glance passed affectionately over the hall. “A little dark—but that could easily be remedied. Really, a lovely

old house." She rose, and Donald held her coat for her.

"Thank you. It's been delightful." She put out her hand, holding his a fraction longer than usual. In that brief second Donald felt the power of her old allure and after she had gone and Dobson had removed the tea things, he sank down again before the fire.

If he married Genevieve—it wouldn't be disagreeable. She was lovely. She could give him everything that Marcia could, excepting only Marcia's keen interest in his work. But, if Genevieve didn't actually help him, she would never interfere with it. He could go on. She might laugh—but she wouldn't try to stop him. And, of course, with Genevieve the old life would continue too. There would be comfort and beauty as always. And he liked these things. Genevieve wouldn't have to adjust herself—as Marcia would—to the splendor and richness of his environment. She'd fit into it naturally because she was used to it.

But Marcia—didn't she fit most charmingly into her own background? As tasteful if not as luxurious a one as his own? Wouldn't she be able to fit in here as well as anywhere given the chance? Ah, but that was it! If he married her—"a woman his grandfather knew nothing about"—would she get the chance? Marcia—a "bit of rubbish nobody loved or wanted ——"

Donald was getting frantic. It was impossible to decide. On the one hand his duty to his grandfather and his people. On the other his duty to himself. His

love for Marcia weighed against his passion for Genevieve.

Genevieve—and money to do as he had dreamed all his life. Genevieve—and a life of service—of unselfishness—of beauty.

Marcia—and only his two bare empty hands to support her. Marcia—and himself disinherited, disowned, with his hope of helping others not even a possibility.

Genevieve—Marcia—but Marcia had told him she would never marry him. Could he ever make her change her mind? If he decided to remain faithful to her, would he finally win her? There was a possibility that he might lose not only his fortune and his dream but Marcia also.

The struggle went on all evening and half the night. Donald slept little. In the morning he went out for a long walk and came back tired but still undecided. By afternoon he was nearly beside himself, and in sudden desperation he determined to go to Jane.

She couldn't, of course, advise him. The matter would have to be settled by him eventually. But he couldn't stand it here another minute. He couldn't endure another second alone with his thoughts. He'd get relief talking anyway, and the next four hours wouldn't be so endless. He called Dobson, telling him where he could be found. It was a habit he had fallen into since his grandfather's sickness.

The street lights were lit and the darkness of the February afternoon was closing in. Outside the snow was falling, thick and fast, and a high wind was piling

it into drifts at which muffled men were already working with their shovels.

He pulled on a pair of arctics and his great fur overcoat. It was going to be a wild night, but he was glad to get out in it. Pulling his cap down over his eyes, and thrusting his hands deep into his pockets he plunged down the steps.

As he swung up the street, a small, cringing figure huddled in a thick overcoat, toiled along the sidewalk behind him, peering at the numbers on the houses. Finally she paused before Donald's door, climbed the steps and pushed the door-bell, just as he swung around a corner out of sight.

CHAPTER XXIV.

THE WAY OUT

"JANE, when are we going to be married?"

"Not, certainly, until you've decently declared your love at least once, Henry."

"Decently declared ——! Well, I like that! Look at my life for the past twenty years. What do you call it, I'd like to know?"

"A silent drama, Henry darling. A song without words."

"Actions speak louder, Jane; you know that."

Jane sighed and smiled.

"You're a dear old hopeless."

Henry growled and sat up straighter in his chair shaking his pipe at her in pretended fury.

"Look here. Do you mean to have the nerve to tell me that if I'd *said* all the things I'd *thought* half my lifetime you'd be ——"

"Deaf. You're spilling ashes."

Glaring, Henry sank back.

"What the——what do I care if I am spilling ashes?"

Jane rose, and going over to him, boldly sat on the arm of his chair and ruffled his hair, smiling down at him.

"Don't be a bear. Donald's coming."

"He's always coming."

"I haven't seen him, Henry, since the night of his party."

"Since the night you cuddled up to Beef Donaghan just this same way. Think I've forgotten?" His twinkling eyes met hers.

Jane tipped back her head and laughed gaily.

"One of these days, Jane, you'll go just a little bit too far," Henry predicted darkly, his gaze on her throat.

"Yes? And then what?"

"Wait and see."

"Can't wait, Henry," mischievously leaning toward him. "You tempt me too far now—just out of curiosity."

But Jane rose from her perch very quickly when Henry caught both her arms in a strong grasp with an unusual gleam in his eye and a queer set to his mouth. She stood before him, twisting her arms to free them.

"Let me go," she commanded. "I've learned my lesson."

"We'll see if you have." He pulled her a little lower so he could look into her eyes. "Are you afraid?"

"Terribly," she smiled, hoping she didn't show it.

"Of what?"

"You," she breathed, mockingly.

For a brief moment he peered deep, then abruptly he let her go, and got to his feet beside her, looking at her with such a strange steadiness that she grew a little confused.

"You—hurt." She rubbed her arms, and then hear-

ing Donald's step on the stairs, she hurried away from Henry to the door. He came in with a rush of cold air, half covered with snow, and while Jane fussed over him, Henry stood watching them quietly.

"Just in time, Donald," he said at last, holding out his hand. "Jane is giving advice to the love-lorn—free."

"Good! That's what I've come for," Donald laughed, spreading his wet coat over a chair and pulling it near the fire.

"I'll pass on what I've learned first."

Jane, a little curious, a little puzzled, took her usual low chair in the shadows, her eyes on Henry's face. Usually she knew just what he'd say and do, but to-night—lately, in fact,—he'd been surprising her.

"Rule number one."

Henry had taken his big chair again. Donald stood by the fire, warming his hands.

"Rule number one. When a woman pretends she doesn't want to listen, that's the time she most wants to."

"Really?"

"Really. I learned that a long time ago. Didn't I, Jane?"

"So long I'd forgotten, Henry."

"Well, I hadn't. Rule number two. Never make the mistake of thinking you can live your love. You can't. Or—well, maybe you can—but it isn't what a woman wants. She'd rather have you tell it. And tell it. And tell it!"

"Let me get this straight." Donald's gray gaze met

Jane's humorously. "When a girl says—'now please don't mention this again,'—you ought to go right around the next night and mention it."

"Hot and fast," Henry nodded. "And don't wait till the next night. Oh, if I'd known all this when I was your age!"

"Rule number three," Jane joined in abruptly, for she and Henry were far from being satisfied with the progress of Donald's and Marcia's affair. "When a woman refuses steadily to listen,—carry her off."

"Hah! Caveman stuff!" Donald felt of his muscles. Henry smoked quietly, his eyes on the ceiling.

"Exactly. Rush her off her feet. Don't give her a chance to think—or reason—or argue. Women are thinking and reasoning too much these days—and not feeling enough."

"Well, I'm much obliged." Donald's face grew suddenly serious. "I wish my case could be treated as simply as that. Joking aside, I'm in a terrible hole."

And he proceeded to unburden his heart before these two good friends,—for Henry, since the rediscovery of Marcia, had jumped overnight to a high place in Donald's esteem.

Henry listened with his kind eyes half shut in thought, but a bright spot of color leaped out on each of Jane's two cheeks and when he had done, she marched up to him.

"Donald, which of these girls do you love?"

"I love Marcia," he answered at once.

"Which do you want to marry?"

"Marcia."

"Well, then." It was conclusive.

But Donald was still troubled.

"That's all right as far as I'm concerned. But she won't have me. And there are still Mike—and Mame—and the school plan. I hate like the deuce to flunk them, Jane."

Jane put her hands on his shoulders.

"You're not going to flunk them. That's where your grandfather's made the mistake of his life. You don't need his help."

"But how ——"

"Go to the telephone, Donald McIntyre, and call up those two doctors whose names Marcia gave you. Make an appointment to see them to-day—to-night—now—at once. They'll give it to you, once they hear your name."

"Yes, but ——"

"Sell 'em your idea!" Jane blazed. "You've sold it to me—and I'm a canny buyer. You sold it to your grandfather,—you just finished telling us,—and heavens knows he's cannier. You've sold it to everybody to whom you've told it." She quieted. "You've got a big thing in your mind, Donald, and you're going to talk to big men. They'll be tickled to death to be in on the ground floor."

"But the money!"

"Oh, the money!" Jane shook him impatiently and dropped her hands. "The money'll come. I'll help you get it. Once get a thing like that started and the money'll pour in. It'll be easier to raise than weeds."

Jane stopped breathless, and Henry stepped quietly into the breach.

"You do as Jane says. She knows a lot,—that woman."

"Marcia told me to do the same thing. She wanted me to see the doctors before I saw Grandfather."

"Marcia knows a lot, too."

"Hurry, Don."

Jane pushed him to the telephone, listened breathlessly while he made an appointment with one doctor at once, and with the other that same evening, then helped him on with his coat and sped him on his way.

"I still think ——" Donald said, pausing at the door.

"It'll be all right." Jane laughed and nodded and pushed him out. Then she came back to Henry.

"Now, Henry Gray, what next?"

He looked a little puzzled.

"Don't you know?" he asked.

She shook her head.

"Haven't a glimmer. But I promised I'd help him raise the money. Now how'll I do it?"

Henry looked at her again, in growing bewilderment.

"Why, I thought you had the idea, all hatched."

"What idea?"

"The same one I had."

"What is it? Goodness! You drive me crazy."

"My dear Jane, do you mean to say it never occurred to you that you could put such a startling piece in the papers it would make old man McIntyre sit up and take notice?"

Light dawned on Jane's face.

"Make him sit up and take notice?" she cried exultantly. "I'll make him eat his own words. Henry! you're a genius."

"I've gone unappreciated a good many years, Jane," Henry remarked mildly.

But Jane did not hear him. She was already at her desk, scribbling for dear life. Henry took his chair again, resuming his placid smoking. Jane scratched busily, whirling at last to face him.

"Listen to this. How does it sound?"

She read what she had written. Henry listened critically, and passed approval. Jane sighed suddenly and dropped her hands to her lap.

"I'll get this in the morning paper. Oh, Henry, you are an angel in disguise. Who'd ever think, to look at you now, the picture of sweet dreaminess, you could hide such a brilliant idea!"

"I'm full of 'em," said Henry, nodding at her. "Full of 'em. Shall I answer the 'phone?"

"Please do."

He took down the receiver.

"Mr. McIntyre? No, he's not here. He's just left. Who is it, please?—Miss—Who? Oh, yes! Yes—No,—I don't think he's coming back—wait a minute—I don't know——" He covered the mouthpiece with his hand. "Is Donald coming back?"

"Of course, stupid, for supper, between visits to the doctors."

"Yes"—Henry spoke into the telephone again—"he's coming back—I don't know just when. Per-

haps an hour—any message?—I don't understand—
what hospital?—who? ——” He turned to Jane
abruptly. “Come take this message. I can't make it
out. Somebody's hurt —— Something about Miss
Powers—at a hospital ——”

CHAPTER XXV

COURAGE

MAME waited for the big door before her to open. It seemed ages to the shivering, frightened child before there came a click!—and she faced the unmoved countenance of Dobson.

“Is Mr. Mack—McIntyre here?”

“No.”

The door began slowly to close. In a frenzy of desperation Mame said hurriedly:

“Will you please tell me where I kin find him?”

There was no answer, but there were only a few inches now for the door to go, through which opening Dobson’s round eye looked with disapproval upon this offensive person who dared to make the front way her approach.

“Wait! you leather-faced old devil!” Mame suddenly shouted. And as she spoke she thrust her shabby foot into the opening and beat with both blue hands upon the heavy panels.

“’Ow would yer like me to call the police?” Dobson inquired frigidly.

“Oh!” Mame was half crying. “I ain’t doin’ nothin’! I gotta see Mr. Mack—that’s all—why’n yer tell me where he is?”

Dobson’s toe against hers—her foot sliding out—the door shut. Mame, with her anger drying the tears

in her eyes, turned to go down the steps again and nearly ran into a furred figure coming up.

The woman drew aside in distaste. Mame, dashing away the last bright drops, saw who was there and clutched her with both hands.

"Oh, Miss Powers! Please help me!"

Genevieve's first instinct was to shake off the clinging creature. The child was dirty —— She wanted to get in —— It was bitter out here—but a second thought, a wonder as to whether Donald himself might not chance to look out of the windows above, made her pause.

"Why, Mame! What is it?"

"I wanna see Mr. Mack! I gotta see him. Mike's hurt—awful. And he wants him."

"Well—wouldn't Mr. McIntyre see you?"

"That hunk o' cheese wot opened the door says he ain't in. An' he won't tell me where I kin find him. Please, you find out, Miss Powers. Mike's ——" Her voice broke.

"Come inside. We'll talk it over where it's warm."

Dobson, peering cautiously through the window in the doorway, hurried to answer the peremptory summons, stood, unmoved, under Genevieve's rebuke and drew chairs before the fireplace for Miss Powers and the shabby child whom he had shut out a moment before, and who now seized an opportunity to thumb her nose at his implacable face.

"Isn't Mr. McIntyre here, Dobson?"

"No, ma'am."

Genevieve turned to the girl.

"Now, Mame. Tell me. Dobson, don't go."

"It's Mike. He's been run over. His leg's terrible bad. They've got to cut it off and Mike won't let 'em till Mr. Mack comes ——"

Genevieve suppressed an exclamation, while Mame, her chin quivering, went on.

"He's so scairt, poor kid. He says if Mr. Mack sez so, he'll let 'em do anything. Ma's gone to nothin' like a hunk o' fat over fire ——"

"Where is he?"

"At the hospital."

This was sickening, but there was only one thing for Genevieve to do. When Donald should hear of this, he must know that she had done everything possible to help Mike. She turned sharply to Dobson.

"Where is Mr. McIntyre?"

"At Miss Harcourt's, Miss Powers."

"Get him on the 'phone at once."

Bowing stiffly, Dobson withdrew and Mame sat swinging her legs and staring about her with interest.

"Gosh! he is a dude fer fair, ain't he?"

"How did you know his real name—and where he lived?"

"He dropped that letter from the doctor. I picked it up when I was cleanin' the room, an' read it." Mame was unabashed.

There was a little silence. Genevieve was lost in her thoughts. Donald would be grateful that she had done this—Donald would be pleased at her interest in his friends—her concern over their troubles ——

Mame, fidgeting, felt the need of conversation.

"It's a rotten day, ain't it?"

"Yes—quite," absently.

"Mrs. Donaghan's worse."

"Oh—is she?"

"Yunh. She won't go back to the Sanitatum, an' she don't stay in bed. Said she'd druther die standin' up than lyin' ——"

These bare statements shocked Genevieve. She looked at Mame, her attention caught.

"She do' wanna live, yer see. An' I don't blame her. Livin'—our way—ain't a path o' roses."

"No."

Dobson reappeared.

"Mr. McIntyre has just left Miss Harcourt's, ma'am. Do you wish to leave a message?"

"I'll speak to Miss Harcourt."

Genevieve rose swiftly and went into the study where she told Jane what had happened and left word that Donald was to come to the H—— hospital as soon as he returned from the doctor's. She would go there, herself, now, with Mame and see if there was anything she could do.

Out in the storm again and cosily tucked inside Genevieve's roadster,—Mame, as in a dream, blinked and lost the power of speech until Genevieve's questions brought her out of her daze.

"When was Mike hurt?"

"Early this afternoon. He'd ortern't go out such weather. His crutch slips an' he can't move fast. A truck skidded an' Mike was knocked down."

The hospital. The faint odor of anesthetics filling

the atmosphere. Quiet. White-garbed figures and soft voices. Genevieve had never been in one before. It made her a little faint. Why had she come? Need she stay? Yes, she must be here when Donald came.

She followed the nurse down long corridors. Glimpses of large rooms—white beds where still figures lay inert,—laughter—a groan—sobbing. A bell ringing suddenly. Orderlies carrying a stretcher covered with a sheet under which something made horrible noises. Genevieve saw a widening blot of dark red as the men passed her with their burden. She clutched Mame's hand which had been in hers since they entered. The child looked up.

"Don't be scairt, Miss Powers."

"I'm not," through stiff lips.

"You look like you was goneter faint."

"I'm not."

Genevieve's pride sustained her, but it was an ordeal. She followed blindly into the big ward where it seemed to her that millions of white beds stretched before her dazed eyes. She had to pass them—all of them. Dimly she saw the occupants though she tried not to look. A child, her leg hung up by straps and weights—an old woman with bleary eyes, babbling foolishly—a black browed man, his head bound up, glaring fiercely—another child, rolling its head on the pillow and sobbing with pain—a boy, his arm gone—children—children——

"Here we are."

The nurse stopped before a folding screen. Could she go behind it? No sound, but a deep, ragged cry—

ing. Her knees were giving way. They must not see her fall—all these people. She wouldn't. She stepped behind the screen and sank into a chair which the nurse thrust suddenly under her.

When the mists cleared she was looking up into the face of Marcia Kingston. Her head was against Marcia's arm and Marcia was gently wiping her forehead.

"It's all right, nurse. Don't stay. You're busy. I'll take care of her now."

Genevieve struggled upright.

"How foolish of me ——"

"It's your first time, isn't it?"

Genevieve nodded.

"I think you were very brave—and kind—to come."

Marcia went back to her own chair, and Genevieve looked about her. Mame, next to Marcia, her hand in Marcia's two—Mrs. Jones whose ragged crying was the sound Genevieve had heard,—an empty bed ——

"Is he—has he ——?"

"It was dangerous to wait longer," Marcia was explaining to Genevieve, looking at Mame. "That long delay at home there before the ambulance came—it was too bad. They were afraid of blood poisoning."

"But how'd yer git him ter go?"

"He's going to surprise Mr. Mack," Marcia smiled.

"Ah! You thota that. You made him do it!"

"Will Donald be here soon?" Marcia inquired of Genevieve, and even in that strange, bewildering moment, Genevieve noticed the unconscious use of his first name.

"Yes, any time, I think."

She told what she had done. Marcia listened gravely, her sweet, clear eyes on the other girl's face. Under that straight look, Genevieve suddenly felt a little uncomfortable. She wished she hadn't come. Why should she stay now? There was really nothing she could do. Yet—now that Marcia was here,—she didn't want to leave.

The nurse reappeared, folding back the screen a little.

"He's coming."

Genevieve, her faintness returning, nodded reassuringly to the nurse and crowded her chair back against the wall out of the way. Mrs. Jones' sobs grew louder. Mame, frightened, cursed her sharply. Soft footsteps—the slow wheeling of the table to the bed—the gentle lifting off of a small figure—nurses deftly tucking the covers up high about him—doctors——

Genevieve caught a glimpse of Mike's face, familiar yet strange. It was too white and with his dark eyes closed he was not quite the same. He was breathing heavily, one limp hand falling out of the covers. The nurse who had come and gone so much put it under the blankets. How awful to be so helpless.

"He's not out of the ether yet," the nurse whispered. Doctors and orderlies withdrew. The nurse was left alone by Mike's bed. She lifted his wrist. Genevieve noticed her hands. Slim and white—like her own. She glanced down at hers in her lap. But hers were useless.

"Perhaps in half an hour he'll come out. There

are so many people needing me. It's supper hour—our busiest time. Will you call me?"

Marcia nodded. The nurse turned away, paused to glance at Genevieve.

"All right?"

"Yes, thanks."

They were all still behind the screen. Marcia moved up close to the bed and bent over it, looking at the unconscious lad. His breathing grew deeper—rattled. Marcia wiped off his wet forehead and slipped a finger into his loose clasp. He clutched it—groaning. Genevieve looked away.

Why had she come? Why did she stay? But she didn't dare move now. She couldn't go past those beds again alone. She couldn't—she wished ——

Mrs. Jones broke into loud sobbing. Mame shook her.

"Ma! Quit that!"

Somehow Marcia quieted them both. She was so gentle, so reassuring, so quietly authoritative——Genevieve wished there were something she could do. If Donald came now, he'd see only Marcia——

The boy stirred, flung out an arm, rolled his head about and groaned.

"Call the nurse."

But Genevieve could not move. Was he going to die? Mame stepped to the screen and beckoned. The nurse came, quickly, quietly. How could she be—not frightened? Mike's breathing was terrible. Genevieve could not believe the reassuring words.

"Oh, yes, he's coming out fast. He'll soon know

you all." She smiled, laid one of her slim white hands—so like Genevieve's own—on the lad's head. "Don't let him get uncovered. And don't let him talk. He'll fall asleep soon and then"—she nodded to Mrs. Jones and Mame—"you can all go."

Another time of waiting. Lights popped on. Marcia turned the low lamp on the table next the bed away from Mike so the glare shouldn't be in his face. Suddenly his awful noises stopped. He moved his lips, rolled his eyes—— Marcia bent over him, talking softly, wiping his face tenderly as the sweat came.

"Hello, Mike dear. We're all here. Mother and Mame—— You're a good sport, Mike. I'm proud of you. A good little sport. Mr. Mack will be so pleased——"

Mike opened his eyes—saw her—wet his lips——

Mrs. Jones, sniffing, drew close, and fell on her knees, bursting into a paroxysm of tears. Mame, at a glance from Marcia, touched Mike's face gently with her hard little hand and helped her mother up.

"Better take her now, Mame. Mike must sleep."

Mame nodded.

"G'-night, Miss Kingston."

Genevieve and Marcia were alone by the bed. The boy was breathing quietly now—almost asleep. Suddenly he opened his eyes,—struggled to whisper.

"Mr. ——?"

"He'll be here soon. He wasn't home. We had to find him. He's got the message now, and he's on the way. Go to sleep, Mike, and you'll see him when you wake up."

Now Genevieve knew she ought to go. But she couldn't. It wasn't the paralysis of fear that held her. It was curious fascination. The long room with its sick people seemed somehow to be beautiful—the white-garbed nurses were like angels. Angels of God, ministering ——

When had she ever thought of God before?

She looked across at Marcia. How queer for her to be here by this strange lad—in this place. A feeling of utter unreality seized her. It was all a dream. She wasn't here. This wasn't herself. It was another person. It was another person who pulled her chair softly forward and bent over eagerly to Marcia. It was another person, saying queer unexpected things in her own voice —— It was all strange, and yet somehow, all right, too.

"I can go, I suppose."

Marcia nodded.

"There's nothing I can do."

"I don't believe so. Thank you."

"You'll stay?"

"Until Donald comes, yes. I couldn't bear to think of his waking up here all alone."

"I'll stay, too."

Marcia did not look surprised. She simply nodded her head.

Genevieve's glance turned toward the boy. How white he was. But he wasn't sweating any more. Breathing so quietly—could he be hurt? Would it hurt when he woke up—where they'd cut off his leg? What a horrible thing to have happen. What a hor-

rible world it was, really, when you thought about all these people. She hadn't known — But she knew now. Would she ever forget again? She wished she could — It wasn't pleasant —

She put a finger into Mike's palm as Marcia had done. It closed round hers, warm and tight. How he clung! It gave her a queer feeling. His face turned toward her. Genevieve kept her eyes down, on his hand—the dirty, broken nails—and hers. Hers was so white. So white and slim. She liked her hands. They were like the nurse's—but the nurse's hands could do things. Hers couldn't. She had come to do things—to help—and hadn't done a thing. Marcia had done it all.

But had she come to help? The little unexpected question jumped into her mind without warning. She tried to shove it back, but it popped out again, and Genevieve's head went a little lower.

She hadn't come to help. Marcia had. But she had come for purely selfish reasons, simply so that Donald might see her here, and think she cared, and be pleased —

Something like shame filled the girl, but she did not know it for shame. She only knew she had never felt so out of place and uncomfortable in her life. And then quite suddenly Mike's eyes opened and he looked in puzzled bewilderment into her face. Genevieve heard her own voice, gentle, saying comforting things as Marcia had. She was glad she could.

"It's Miss Powers. Do you remember me, Mike? I danced at the party when you played. Did you bring

your violin to the hospital, Mike? No? I'll bring it to you to-morrow. Wouldn't you like it here beside you when you go to sleep? And pretty soon when you are well enough to sit up, you can play for all these people. They'll love it, Mike ——"

Mike smiled.

"Mr. Mack?" he whispered softly.

"Coming. Coming soon."

Mike's eyes closed. There was a moment of silence, then his little voice, weak and thin.

"Gee! I'm a lucky guy."

Had she heard aright? The little thin voice went on.

"It was my bad leg. D'ye ever hear o' such luck?"

Something big came into Genevieve's throat. She swallowed.

"S' a nice clean bed, ain't it? Miss Kingston here?"

"Right here, Mike."

Marcia came around in sight.

"I want to tell you something—and then you must go to sleep again. Right outside your window, Mike, is a church. It has a tall spire. And in the spire is a big gold clock. It strikes every hour—lovely music—chimes, Mike. It's going to strike now. Listen."

Through the winter night and through the thick walls of the hospital the mellow tones sounded. Six deep beautiful notes. Then a pause—and a melody of bells. Mike's face lit up.

"Lucky! all right!" He smiled at them both.

"We're all waitin' fer Mr. Mack, ain't we?"

"Yes, Mike."

Marcia's low voice answered. Genevieve could not speak. Mike suddenly fell asleep and Marcia took the chair next to Genevieve.

Genevieve bent forward and put her hand on Marcia's knee.

"I wish you'd talk to me."

"Why, of course."

"Tell me. Are you happy—working?"

"Oh, I couldn't live without it."

"Is Donald really happy—working?"

"I think so."

"He's not used to it."

"No—but—he's grown used to it. If ——"

"If—what?"

"If he doesn't grow away from it, now, while he's home."

The two girls looked at each other silently. In Genevieve's eyes there was a deep, passionate question. In Marcia's—a dim pain.

"Tell me," Genevieve's words jerked, "have you known him long?"

"About—a year."

"You love him?"

"Yes."

"Well—*so do I!*"

It came harshly, defiantly. Genevieve blazed it at her, but Marcia only smiled.

"I know it. You—I hope he marries you. I think—I think it would be—right."

Genevieve stared.

"But I thought—you said ——"

"I do love him. I love him enough to give him up."

There was nothing dramatic about it. It was said simply, bravely, but with such sincerity that Genevieve could not help but believe her. She looked and looked at the girl before her, and then, quietly, Marcia rose.

"There's no sense in all of us waiting—for Mr. Mack. If you'll stay ——"

"Sit down."

Queer feeling. Queer thoughts. Genevieve couldn't understand them or manage them. She was all a blur in her mind—all an ache in her throat and body. She knew only one thing.

There was courage all about her. Every sick person in the whole big room had it. The nurses had it—otherwise they couldn't do the things they had to do with their slim white hands. Mike had it—"Gee! I'm a lucky guy!" Marcia had it.

"I love him enough to give him up."

Where was her courage? Had she any? She had if she didn't stop to think. A life of work—would she be happier? A life with Donald—but Donald loved this girl. She knew it now. She'd always known it. That was why she couldn't quite get him—could never hold him —— Did she want him,—even if Marcia gave him to her, knowing that?

She rose suddenly, her eyes very black in a white face. Marcia rose too. Without touching her, Genevieve spoke, gaily, bravely.

"There isn't any sense in all of us waiting for Donald—you're right. So I'm going. Don't you desert him too, will you?"

"No! You mustn't! Let me ——"

But Genevieve put off the girl's detaining hand.

"Yes, I must! Tell him"—she laughed—"tell him for me I've decided to devote the rest of my life to work. A new thrill!"

Nodding and smiling, she stepped out from behind the screen and went quickly down the long room to the door.

CHAPTER XXVI

STRANGE SWEET ENDS

MARCIA was left alone with her thoughts. For a long time she sat motionless by the bed, her hands loosely clasped in her lap, a myriad of expressions chasing over her expressive face.

Slowly the big room grew quieter as supper trays were carried away and the nurses went down the line of beds making their patients comfortable and clean for the night. One by one the little lights were switched off, except here and there where a sick man or woman was well enough to sit up and read. And in the gathering stillness Marcia's tumbled thoughts took shape and order, one towering bigger and brighter than all the rest.

"I'd have to love a man with every bit of me!"—"I'd have to rather *die* than live alone without my man!"

Living had been hard and lonely since Christmas. That night of the party had given Marcia a glimpse of the depth of her feeling for Donald, but in the long, empty weeks since then she had come to know it fully. She had come to realize that life, stretching wearily ahead of her for endless years, was impossible—unbearable—without Donald. Her head *hadn't* gotten hold of her heart. It couldn't make her believe that her work was enough. She wanted him. She loved

him with every bit of her. Nothing else mattered—his grandfather, his wealth, his name, the mystery of her own birth—these things weren't important. The great fact was that she loved him too much to live without him.

And now Genevieve had let him go. A little sob that was half a laugh came to Marcia's lips. It had been beautiful and brave of Genevieve. She would tell Donald when he came ——

And then something very like panic filled her heart. He was coming. He would be here any moment now. Listen! the clock in the tower was striking eight. Suppose—suppose he didn't want her? Suppose he didn't ask her again? Suppose he had drifted back into his other life?

Footsteps coming down the darkened room—a nurse's low tones—"Right here, behind this screen ——" and Donald's big figure stepping into the little enclosure.

"Marcia!"

It was just a whisper, but his two hands had both of hers and even in the dimness she could see the joy on his face—could feel the love that pulsed in his big body so close to hers —— It made her dizzy.

Then, with that selflessness of which they were both so capable, they bent over the bed. For Mike had heard the stir and now opened his eyes, calling feebly for his friend.

"You *did* come."

"Indeed, yes, old fellow. What a brick you've been! I'm proud of you!"

"Are you? Say, but did Miss Kingston tell you? It's my bad leg ——"

"I know. Lucky, wasn't it?"

"Lucky? I should say so. Stay, won't you?"

"A while."

They took the chairs that Marcia and Genevieve had had so recently, and in a few minutes the boy grew drowsy again. Soon he was sound asleep. Donald straightened and smiled at Marcia.

"Plucky little youngster, isn't he?"

Marcia nodded. Donald bent over the lad again, lifting a long lock of black hair off his forehead with gentle fingers. Marcia, watching, was suddenly overwhelmed by a rush of longing. That big hand—so tender —— She wanted it on her face. Her desire and her love made her ache to her finger-tips. While she sat in a tumult of emotion, struggling against tears, fighting for composure, Donald turned to face her.

"Marcia," he said gravely, "Grandfather has disinherited me."

"Oh, Don ——" startled. And then, flashing like sunlight through her mind, came the thought that she was glad. Ought she to be? She couldn't help it. But it made easier what she wanted to say.

"I was to let him know to-night at eight whether I would marry a woman he chose for me, and take his money for my school, or whether I—wouldn't. I didn't even go home."

"But, Don ——"

He put his hand over hers.

"I couldn't give you up. Don't you know that,—honey-bell?"

For a moment Marcia just looked at him, then she laid her little hand against his cheek, and leaning close, whispered in reply:

"I'm so glad. Because—oh, Don—I couldn't give you up, either!"

He made a sharp exclamation and glanced quickly around, then pulling her to her feet, he drew her to an angle of the big screen that shut them off from the rest of the room. Here, with his arms circling her tight, he held her close against him, triumph and wonder struggling for mastery in his face.

"Say it again," he commanded.

"I couldn't—give you up, either—dearest," she breathed.

"My dear—my dear ——"

Over and over he said it, crushing her tight,—letting her go to look in joyous amazement at her as he tried to believe it was true—stroking her hair ——

"My dear—my dear ——"

No other words but these, but how sweet they were! And his hands, his lips, his eyes told her all the rest. She leaned against him, clinging, while the big room rocked and whirled about her. But it didn't matter, for he had her safe. Nothing mattered except their love. How silly she'd been—how foolish ——

"Sugar!" he said at last softly.

"You think of such darling pet names."

"Do I?" He kissed her again, but she put her hands against his shoulders and held him off.

"Tell me things. What about your school, if—if your grandfather ——"

"We'll put it over somehow—just ourselves, Marcia." There was a new ring in his voice. "I've just come from Dr. Drake's. He's awfully interested—wants to help—gave me half a dozen names. Won't it be great, working at it together?"

"Glorious. But, dearest ——"

"What?"

"What are we going to—to live on?"

"You practical soul!" he scolded. "Can't we live on love?"

"I can—but you can't."

He laughed.

"You forget. I've got a job. Beef said I could come back any time."

"But, Don—down there? Would you?"

"Why, honey, of course! Why not?"

"Oh, I—I just wasn't sure."

And then Donald grew grave, and lifted her chin, and made her look at him.

"Sweetheart. My old life is gone. I've given it up, forever. Do you understand? The door is shut in my face. I shut it myself. I'm not a McIntyre any longer. I'm poor—and—I'm nobody."

"Like me, Don."

"Have you courage to marry me—without ——"

She laid her soft hand over his mouth.

"That's not fair. It doesn't take courage to marry a Nobody. It takes courage to marry a Somebody. To marry a Nobody all you need is love."

There was only one fitting reply to that and after he had made it, Marcia drew away again.

"Don. Tell me—please. Was the girl your grandfather wanted you to marry—Genevieve?"

He looked at her in surprise.

"Yes, dearest. But how did you ——?"

So she told him, and somehow Marcia's sweet, generous way of telling it made Genevieve's renunciation an even greater thing than it was. When she had finished they stood hand in hand, both a little moist-eyed as they contemplated her courage.

"Pardon me." A white cap bobbed around the screen. "I don't think this screen needs to be here any longer. Or—oh, excuse me! does it?"

"No!" Donald laughed, swinging Marcia's hand boyishly. "No! you may take it away now. I've got her, and I'm ready to tell the world!"

CHAPTER XXVII

DREAMS COME TRUE

THE next morning an irascible old gentleman could be seen eating his breakfast by the table set up before his big chair in the bedroom where he had spent so much time lately. After waiting all the evening for Donald to appear in a contrite mood and express his willingness to give up the "common girl" in order to keep the money so necessary to his scheme, he had retired finally to spend a sleepless night tossing and turning on the large bed.

Where was the fellow? He hadn't really expected to be taken seriously. He had spoken in haste but he'd had no idea Donald had the stuff in him that would make him give up as much as that. Still he ought to have known. After all, McIntyre blood was McIntyre blood. You couldn't get away from that. He himself had never brooked dictation from another man. He'd rather have anything happen than lose Donald again. Life wasn't worth living without the boy.

But for all that Donald had no business to drag the family name in the mud. He had no business to think he had no one and nothing to consider but himself in this marriage proposition. Being a McIntyre had its responsibilities. Donald couldn't shake them off as one does bothersome flies. By Jove! He couldn't! And

he'd teach him that, too. He'd stick to his guns. The lad would be back soon enough! He'd find out he needed help for this new school which interested him so much. He'd learned a good deal but he still had a long way to go. You couldn't put over an enterprise like that without publicity—and funds—and well-known names—— Donald would *have* to come back. He'd sit tight until he did. Then he'd talk turkey again. And the next time the boy'd listen. He certainly would.

"Has the paper come, Dobson?" he snapped.

"Right here, sir."

The old gentleman set down his coffee cup, unfolded the paper and leaned back in his chair with determination written large on his brow. He was right. Now he'd wait for a chance to prove it. In the meantime nothing should interfere with his daily pleasure over his coffee and the news.

But the next moment he jerked forward, the paper rattling in his hands as his eyes lit on large headlines on the front page. Startled, incredulous, angry, he read hastily what was written there, his hands still shaking, his grim old face fierce in its intentness.

"MCINTYRE HEIR DISOWNED

LIVED INCOGNITO IN SLUMS FOR MONTHS. EVOLVED
GIGANTIC SCHEME FOR IMPROVING EDUCATIONAL
SYSTEM WHICH GRANDFATHER DISAPPROVES "

What was all this about? How had they known? His private affairs—— He'd give them a piece of his——! What else did they have to say?

"Donald McIntyre, III, sole heir to the vast McIntyre fortune, has startled society by the courage and independence of his recent actions. His disappearance, months ago, from his home and the life where he had been so prominent a figure has caused much conjecture among his friends. If his grandfather knew his whereabouts—and it is now suspected he did not—he kept it a secret, for reasons of his own——"

Now what was insinuated there? How did they dare? Had they forgotten who he was—the power he held—the money—— He read on.

"During the months of his mysterious disappearance, young McIntyre has been living incognito in the worst section of the city—working——" Yes, he knew all that. What he wanted was—ah! here it was.

"The severe illness of his grandfather was the bait that finally lured him home, and he returned, confident in the belief that as soon as he was recovered, Mr. McIntyre, Sr., would give his instant approval and financial backing to a most worth-while plan for improving the educational system of the East Side.

"To his dismay he found the opposite the case. Mr. McIntyre, Sr., met the young man's appeal with disapproval and issued the stern ultimatum that unless he was willing to abandon the whole affair, he would be sent penniless from his home."

All wrong! All wrong! Just like the newspapers to garble the truth——

"It was then that the young heir to countless millions showed he was made of the same stuff as his

grandparent. Without wasting words, he left the house and went directly to interview some men well known in the medical and financial world, with the result that he has succeeded in winning not only their interest but promises of material support.

"The list of those who are willing to contribute large sums to aid young McIntyre in a scheme that is so highly approved by men of repute will be made public to-morrow. It will surprise many people not to see the name of McIntyre leading such a list——"

Fury raged paramount for a while. Over and over he read the account. It included everything. A brief summary of Donald's life and character as well as the details of his plans. How had they dared? He'd show them! His private affairs——! Finally the old gentleman settled into calm. He fixed his eyes on space while his face became like a mask. The coffee was left cold in his cup, the toast went untasted. Dobson hesitantly removed the tray and still the old man sat still, his whole body motionless except for the nervous tapping together of his fingers.

Finally his grim features relaxed. Something that might have been a smile twitched at the corners of his mouth. A light—was it pride?—lit up his old face, and with a return of his old sharp assurance he summoned Dobson, ordered him to telephone the office of the *Herald* and request that a reporter be sent to his house at once.

An hour later a small woman with soft brown hair and alert gray eyes sat before the old magnate. Her crisp, businesslike manner, holding just the right touch

of deference, pleased him. He talked at great length, while Jane Harcourt quietly took notes. At the end of that time he dismissed her abruptly.

"If the newspapers insist upon printing private matters they would better get it straight."

"Of course. I was sure there was a mistake somewhere. Thank you for the interview, Mr. McIntyre. I will see that this reaches the papers this afternoon."

And, smiling to herself, she withdrew.

The old scalawag! Henry had sized him up right. A materialistic old soul who worshipped success and wanted to ride in the same ship with it. Donald was in for success, and he had been keen enough to know it, and to plan an about-face that would show him proudly playing the bass drum in the band. Well, that was that.

That afternoon she was exulting with Henry when Donald came in with Marcia. There was about them a rosy glow of triumph, and before he was fairly in the room Donald had seized both Jane's hands, and was wringing them heartily.

"Lady Jane! What have you been up to?" he demanded.

"Henry's tricks, I promise you."

"You're both guilty." Donald faced them with mock sternness. "And both condemned to endure the eternal gratitude of Marcia and me. Just listen to this——"

He flung open the afternoon edition of the paper, and read it dramatically.

**"MCINTYRE NAME HEADS LIST OF SUB-
SCRIBERS TO FUNDS FOR THE
SUPPORT OF GRANDSON'S
PHILANTHROPIES**

**"DISAPPROVAL CHANGES TO PRIDE WHEN SCHEME IS
FULLY EXPLAINED TO HIM**

"The young man's haste in jumping to conclusions led to a misinterpretation of his grandfather's attitude and a consequent misstatement of facts, so it was learned at the home of Mr. McIntyre, Sr., this morning. It is to be clearly understood that Donald McIntyre's plan was instantly approved, but the promise of financial help was withheld until proper investigations could be made. Having satisfied himself along these lines, Mr. McIntyre, Sr., stands ready——"

Donald crushed the paper in his hand, slapped it against his thigh and tossed it into the air, then, seizing Marcia in his arms, he tipped her face to his.

"Can you beat it, sweetheart? Everything coming our way! What do you know! Say something——"

The telephone interrupted him. He sprang to answer and the others listened in silence.

"Hello! oh, hello! Dobson! Yes, I'm here. Yes, I'll hold—hello! Grandfather! How are you? Glad to hear—what? Yes, I've seen the papers. Yes—yes—I quite understand. I thought you meant business. Well, I'm sorry—Sure! Sure! it's all right. I understand perfectly. Come up there now? Well,—say, Grandfather, I'm mighty sorry, but I've—I'm—well, the plain truth is that I'm tied up with a girl—yes, the girl I'm going to marry,—my fiancée. I was

planning to take her out to dinner to-night somewhere—— What? Oh! all right! Fine! Yes—yes—we'll be there soon, about half an hour. Good-bye!"

He turned to Marcia, a gleam of happiness in his eyes, a quizzical little note of humor in his voice.

"Grandfather wants to meet you," he said simply.

* * * * *

Spring again. With warm, golden sunlight and soft, alluring breezes, and great clumps of white clouds flying over a turquoise blue sky. Spring, with the merry jangle of hurdy-gurdies and the happy laughter of children at play. Spring, with its mysterious gift of new hope bringing light to tired eyes and joy to burdened hearts. Spring, with its brooding Spirit of Romance spreading her wide wings over the whole vast city, making for all those it touched a magic world aglow with the radiance of love.

Far down-town in the narrow, dirty streets of New York Spring manifested itself by an eternal clang and rattle of machinery, for on the same block where Donald had lived a short while ago was being erected a building that mounted toward the sky. A building which would harbor and nourish hundreds of vague and timid desires, a building where the fires of ambition and genius would be fed by the fuel of encouragement and coöperation.

A little farther up-town in the heart of Greenwich Village there might be found signs of spring also. Outside Jane Harcourt's window Jonathan and David were putting forth their tender buds of green, leaning in the wind over the iron-railed balcony to tap

on the glass which so strangely shut out this golden day.

At last Jane heard their signal and flung the casement windows wide, crying out in surprise to the man behind her.

"Why, Henry Gray! It's spring!"

Henry came forward and stood close beside her.

"So it is," he agreed mildly.

In the enchanting magic of that fragrant sun-flooded moment, the last wintry chill that had held Jane's heart captive in its icy fingers for so long was chased from its farthest corner and she spoke in a soft and reminiscent voice.

"A lot has happened in a year, hasn't it, Henry?"

"Yes. A lot. But not everything, Jane," he answered, sliding his arm around her.

But Jane grew disturbed at the queer melting feeling that was slowly filling her, so she moved away, seeking sharp and familiar weapons with which to protect herself from an unseen danger.

"Everything that ought to happen *has* happened." There was no doubt in her voice.

But Henry kept his eyes on her and Jane would not meet his look.

"Are you being quite honest with yourself, Jane? Aren't you just stubborn?"

"I'm no more stubborn than you are rudely persistent, Henry." Jane sent him an appealing smile.

"Oh, don't let's quarrel. Not to-day. Not Marcia's and Donald's wedding day. Let's ——"

"—make it ours, too. Why not, Jane?"

But Jane evaded, and insisted it was time for them to start, and hurried him out on the streets where she felt safer.

Up-town in a great stone house by Riverside Drive it was spring too, and all of it seemed to have rushed indoors, trying in a mad burst of riotous joy and beauty to transform a place that had been bleak and wintry for many years.

It had succeeded marvellously, for a miracle had been worked in the grim, old hall of the McIntyre mansion. The two huge Sèvres jars were filled with delicate sprays of apple blossoms that flung their fragrance into the air. Great boughs of the lovely flower had been hung over each dark portrait, the strange alchemy of their beauty and their odor lifting the frown of disapproval from forbidding faces which looked down almost beneficently on the unusual scene. Back by the fireplace, which was banked with palms and ferns, a bower of living white roses had been erected, the soft tendrils of green vines swaying gently as Dobson opened the door to admit the invited guests.

Henry and Jane were not the first to arrive. They found five other people already waiting in a stiff line below the rose-entwined, beribboned balustrade. Mrs. Jones, so overwhelmed by the grandeur about her that she vacillated between foolish grins and sentimental soft sobbing; Beef Donaghan, very red, very erect and very uncomfortable in a celluloid collar and blazing tie; and Mike, his white face ablaze with happiness, for he was to play all the music for Mr. Mack's wedding to-day. Back of these three hovered stoop-shouldered

Ikey, his keen, appraising eye on the tapestries hung from the ceiling and wide-eyed Judith clinging closely to his hand.

Jane led Mike to a chair, handed him his violin, and then, after a word to Dobson, she took her place with the others and stood waiting while the music, played so beautifully by the untutored boy, grew louder and louder and filled the old hall with its joyous sound.

Then out from Mr. McIntyre's study walked four men. The tall rector came first, in his sweeping black gown. He took his place before the small altar and stood with his Prayer Book open in his hands, his keen kind eyes passing over first one and then another of the strange groups before him. Behind him came two silvery-haired men. Each was bowed and frail, and each seated himself in one of the two hand-carved chairs, placed on either side of the bower of roses,—Dads, with his face of extraordinary beauty, filled as always with gentle joy and peace, and old Mr. McIntyre, whose grimmer countenance was softened by suffering and sickness, and whose keen old eyes under their scraggy brows held a suspicious moisture. Each man had his dignity, and each man had his strength, and Donald's hand rested a moment in silent pride and affection on the shoulder of each one before he turned to the stairs down which his beloved was coming.

First, little Mame. Mame with her black straight hair evenly cut and brushed 'til it shone like the glossy wing of a raven, and with her arms filled with a great bouquet of deep yellow rosebuds. She moved down

the stairway like a child in a trance, her green eyes wide and wonderful with a breathless excitement. For Mame wore to-day the gown of green she had dreamed of, a beautiful shimmering apple green, most extraordinarily becoming, with the "touch o' black on it som'ers" in a narrow black ribbon floating from each shoulder.

Behind her came Marcia. Marcia with her deep eyes like stars, fixed in steady sweetness on her lover awaiting her at the foot of the stairs. Marcia in a gown of beautiful brocaded satin, the wedding dress of Donald's own mother, exquisitely made over to suit her young loveliness. Marcia with a cloud of white veil drifting away from her flushed and radiant face. Marcia with a song of joy in her heart because life was no longer lonely or fenced about and a magic beginning had led her surely to strange sweet ends.

At the foot of the stairs she paused and Donald stepped forward. A ray of sunlight, reaching through a long window on the stairway, touched his hair softly, turning it to gold. His gray eyes were fixed in reverent love on the Girl of his Dreams, and his face as he led her forward was swept by a blinding, dazzling radiance which caught at the hearts of all those there.

"A beautiful couple," Henry said in a low whisper, and Jane, lifting grave eyes, nodded silently.

A beautiful couple, indeed, whom it was precious to know, she was thinking. For the knowing of these two—Donald especially—had opened life for her in a wonderful new way, enriching it, making it sweeter and fuller —

“Who giveth this woman to this man?”

Old Dads rose, his face serene and bright with his deep contentment, and stepping forward he laid Marcia's little hand in Donald's warm clasp. The ring was slipped on, there was a short prayer, and then the music pealed forth again.

Following the wedding came a feast, and during the feast there was much laughter and merrymaking. To little Judith and Mame the hour was better than a fairy tale; to Mrs. Jones and her burly escort it was a dream to be told over, in ecstasy, to their friends for the rest of their days; to the rector, nodding his head in silent approval as Marcia and Donald managed somehow to make both groups mingle, it was the way life should be lived; to Dads and old Mr. McIntyre it was a peaceful and fitting ending to their stormy careers. While to Jane and Henry it held the subtle sure reminder that life for them was not yet half done.

Sometime later Marcia slipped away and Donald soon followed, while the guests gathered by the open doorway in the sunset. Soon Marcia reappeared, clad in a blue suit—a modish little new one, with a tiny collar cuddling about her throat. With her hand on Donald's arm, the two of them came bravely through the shower of paper rose petals and apple blossoms, and ran down the stone steps. Henry's voice shouting to Marcia made her pause. She turned and looked back.

They had all crowded out of the doorway, and stood looking down at the bride and groom. Henry and

Jane in front, flanked on one side by Ikey and on the other by the burly Beef who held Judith in his arms. Behind them the others peered out;—a smiling, bowing Dobson, a widely grinning Mrs. Jones, and the two silvery-haired old gentlemen, between whose two black figures the bright-eyed Mame stood wedged.

"Bet you won't tell where you're going, Marcia McIntyre!"

Marcia's laugh rang like silver bells in the soft spring air.

"I'm going to the place where Dreams Come True," she called back. And then she jumped into the limousine, Donald followed, and they were whirled out of sight.

It was then that Henry turned to Jane, a strange light in his eyes, a new purpose on his face.

"We're going there, too, Jane. We'll go right now, and get our licenses."

He grasped her elbow and started down the steps, but Jane jerked back.

"Why, Henry! What nonsense! How dare you? You know I've always said no."

Henry, oblivious of an amused and open-mouthed audience, signalled a passing taxicab. It swerved, slowed and halted at the curb. Henry eyed Jane steadily.

"I've been living and learning all winter. 'When she keeps on saying no—carry her off!' Shall I carry you, Jane, or will you walk?"

"I'll walk, Henry," meekly. "Only—tell me where we're going."

"To get licenses. To get married. To get passage for our trip abroad. Hurry, Jane; we'll be able to take advantage of the spring rates." His eyes twinkled but his manner was as firm as ever.

At that Jane laughed deliciously and laid her hand on Henry's arm, and together they marched down the steps with as radiant an air as that of the bride and groom. But Mame, whose green eyes had stared in slowly growing disdain, turned to face the crowd of silent watchers on the steps, jerked her thumb over her shoulder, and remarked in utter disgust:

"My eye! Pipe them old ginks! Ain't that the shark's elbow?"

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